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Nihilism and Modernity

Political Response in a Godless Age

by John Glassford MA (Hons)

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Political Philosophy, to the Open University,
on the 16th of November, 1998

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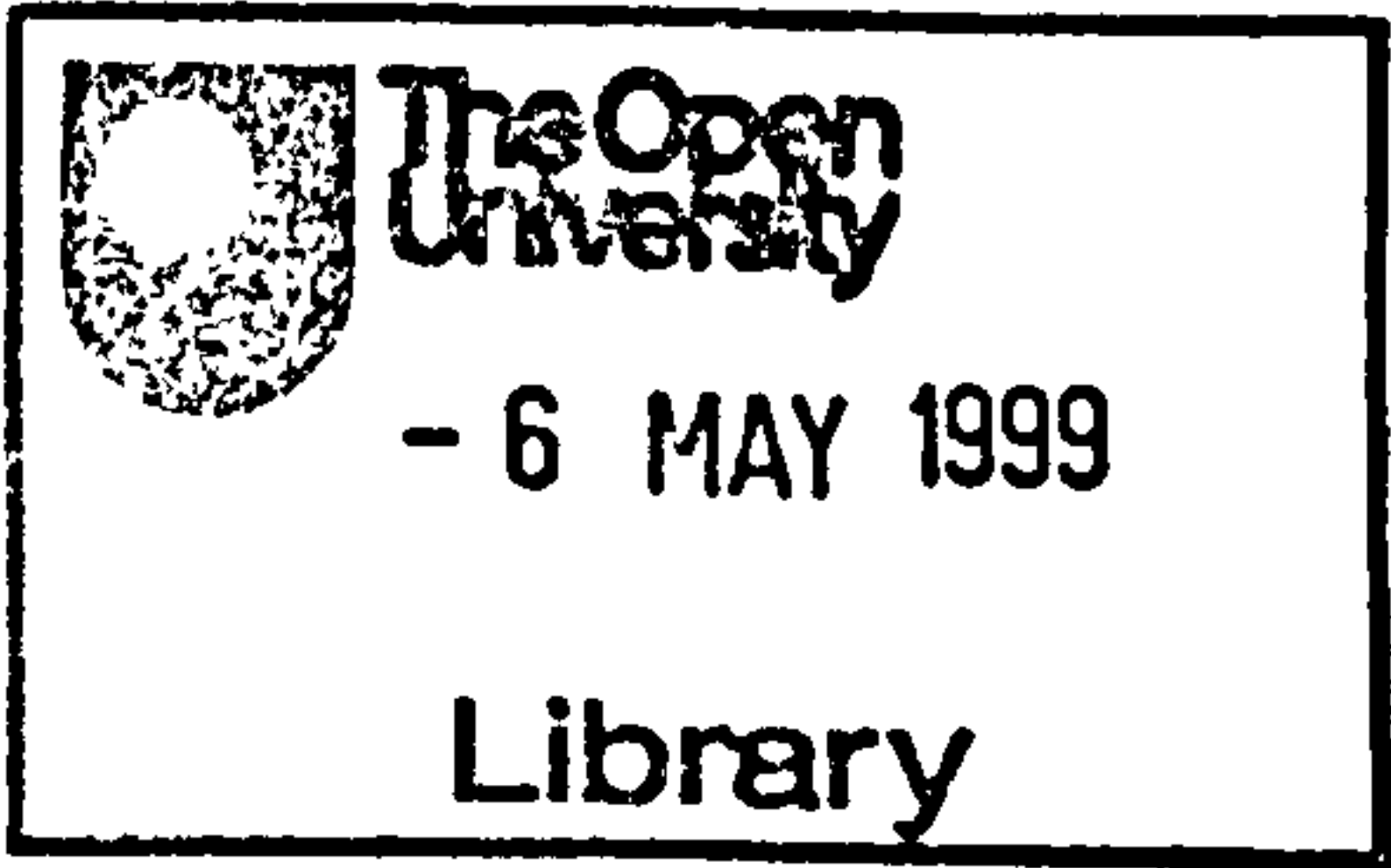
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VLADIMIR: ... The tiger bounds to the help of his congeners without the least reflection, or else he slinks away into the depths of the thickets. But that is not the question. What are we doing here, *that* is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come-

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

A voice cries in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord...

Isaiah 40:3



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For Michèle

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I argue that following Hegel's commitment to *both* political philosophy and political theory, Max Stirner, Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche take flight from doing political theory in the 'Western' tradition. I demonstrate that Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche all use their own respective notions of political philosophy to criticise the very idea of doing political theory *per se*. The evidence for this is to be found in both their *refusal* to do political theory and in their notions of *prophetic agency*. I further argue that this development is bound-up with their particular responses to the post-Hegelian milieu of which they were a part. As such, Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche all subscribed to a novel form of secularised eschatology. Although there have been studies of this secularisation thesis before, most notably by Karl Löwith, and groundbreaking though this study is, it is related to the difficult period in which it was written (the 1930's and 40's). Löwith for example, is concerned with the impact that eschatological thought has on the formation of totalitarian regimes more generally. As a result, such studies, which might encapsulate Hegel's own thought, are often rejected as but a species of the kind of eschatological literature which are also held to be necessarily repressive. However, in this thesis I point to an important cleavage between Hegel and his followers: Hegel, despite his eschatological outlook, remains firmly tied to the traditional 'Western' canon in so far as we see his commitment and application to *doing* political theory, whether descriptive or normative, and as such it is also demonstrably supported by his own political philosophy. Whereas in the case of Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche, their own eschatological projects respectively, are used as weapons in the war against political theory. I demonstrate that this historic cleavage occurs because Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche read eschatology as primarily prophetic and forward looking while Hegel's own eschatology remains *ex eventu*. The former look to legitimating *particular* historical agencies of change while Hegel continues to regard the potential multiplicity's of *all* political agency from within the most promising liberal institutions of modern society.

INTRODUCTION

Political Philosophy *Versus* Political Theory

Political philosophy and political theory are often assumed to be qualitatively different kinds of project. Political philosophy, more often than not, entails a number of abstract ontological assumptions and claims concerning what it is to *be*, or to *be human*. Thus political philosophy will involve or engage in discussions of the moral and ethical basis of law, it will typically include some account of the state, political philosophy will also be concerned with the limits and the proper authority of institutions, a philosophy of power and obligation, an outline of sovereign principles, an account of justice, a theory of liberty, an outline of rights and some account of the 'good life' or of the 'public interest'.

Political theory, although related to such discussions, is much more prosaic, concerned as it is with the actual political structures, institutions and groups which make up a given society. Thus political theory is taken to be concerned primarily with different types of political systems, theories of political development, political culture, methods of political communication, systems of representation, electoral processes, international institutions, the constitutional rules of governance, theories of political leadership and of policy formulation, bureaucracies, an account of the military, the separation of powers and the proper arrangement for any given executive, legislature and judiciary.

These two, when taken *together*, are often assumed to be the proper method of conducting such inquiries and of doing social and political theory in the Western tradition. The argument runs that political theory, understood in the sense outlined above, has always had something to teach us when informed by a deep and penetrating political philosophy which is based upon sound first principles. Thus political thought which follows in this tradition such as that which is to be found in the work of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emmanuel Kant, to name but a few, is considered to be typical of just such an accumulatively wise, 'eternally' valuable and instructive body of thought.¹

¹ Of course there are exceptions to this rather simplified summary, for example, see Nozick, 1988, pps 4-9, who holds that political philosophy should only be applied to state theory and similarly, political theory is only a means to conducting thought experiments regarding competing explanations for this same state.

In this thesis I argue that political theory, understood in this traditional, Western sense, was largely abandoned by Max Stirner, Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche because each subscribed to a novel kind of prophetic eschatology.² In other words, Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche retreat into political philosophy and use it to criticise and then abandon political theory.

Following R. G. Collingwood I will hold that to understand and unpack any given political philosophers thought one must recover the specificity of the historical problem under consideration.³ Thus I will argue back from their shared and underlying assumption that their *own* time was one of nihilism, an assumption that they themselves were not always aware of, to their respective political responses to that nihilism.⁴ In effect, I shall hold that the abandonment of the traditional form of political theorising was one of the most important and unspoken shared effects of German political philosophy in the nineteenth century. This is what I shall call *Political Response* in order to separate this denouement from political theorising of the more traditional variety. I shall further argue that this alleged turn of events caused them to think that their time was one in which there was a desperate need for a new historical agency of social change, one which was suited to an era in which there was a crisis of meaning, a crisis caused, in turn, by the death of God [I will explain what this means shortly].

This crisis of meaning, I shall further argue, was the unintended by-product of Hegel's analysis of the French Revolution in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Thus I hold that despite Hegel's own efforts to reconcile⁵ modern subjectivity with key aspects of modern life more generally, as one commentator has declared, Hegel "sought to achieve peace, the peace of the intellect and the peace of the city", Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche on the other hand, tangentially move toward a messianic conception of social change which follows the eschatological form of the

² In this thesis I give just one reason for the decline of political theory, there are others of course. For example, see the essay "Does Political Theory Still Exist" by Berlin, 1988, p59, where he gives at least two reasons for the decline of theory, the first is the division of the subject into many sub-disciplines and the second is the commanding position of modern positivism which claims to have a more rigorous understanding of what constitutes knowledge in the first place.

³ This also appears to be Raymond Plant's approach to Hegel, I extend this method to include Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche, see Plant, 1983, p15.

⁴ See Magee, 1998, p527, for a summary of Collingwood's method.

⁵ See Hardimon, 1994, for an extended and detailed discussion of Hegel's "project of reconciliation". Although it has become generally accepted that reconciliation is central to Hegel there is very little agreement as to what this amounts to. For example, the very notion of reconciliation would appear to suggest that Hegel is arguing that we *ought* to become reconciled to our social world. This immediately suggests that Hegel's political thought is normative and not descriptive. This in turn is likely to determine whether one holds that Hegel's philosophy is one of immanence or of transcendence.

Christian faith.⁶ Thus they understand modernity to entail the necessary abandonment of the Christian form of teaching, yet they retain the Christian method of legitimisation. Hegel, I shall demonstrate, is able to avoid this denouement because he is able to retain political theory in his own understanding of Christian revelation, an understanding which holds that this revelation was retrospective and not prophetic [My sense of these terms will also become clear shortly]. Thus Hegel is able to re-interpret modernity through his unification of Christian revelation and modern philosophy, rather than allow a historically loaded modernity to re-interpret and abandon both Christianity and philosophy.

In my reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology* I argue that there is a shift in the philosophical problem of life during the course of that text. I take the view, in other words, that there is an implicit shift in so far as the central ontological problem is taken to be nihilism and not alienation.⁷ Although this shift is only implicit in the case of Hegel and Marx, it is obvious in the case of Stirner, and it becomes altogether the point in the case of Nietzsche (the sense of the terms 'alienation' and 'nihilism' will also become apparent shortly). The argument of this thesis therefore, is this: the work of each of these political philosophers held to a conception of modernity which was shaped by the overpowering tropes of a secularised eschatology. I will hold that this secularised eschatology prevented them from developing the kind of comprehensive descriptive theory of modernity that we see in Hegel himself.

I do not suggest that political theory is inconceivable without some deeper religious commitment. However, I do suggest that Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche took their own understanding of modernity to be one in which traditional political theory was perceived to be unsuited to their specific period, in which, according to their own account, widespread cultural disenchantment itself was the basis for a much wider political crisis. In very general terms, I use modernity here to denote this perception of a deep seated religious and cultural disenchantment.

Of course, theories of crisis and the construction of political theory is an enormous subject which continually raises important questions and problems

⁶ For an interesting account of Hegel's gradual accommodation with the harsher realities of modernity and on his rejection of the romantic ideals of his youth, see Kelly, 1978.

⁷ As we shall see, Hegel used the term alienation in two different senses, as meaning self-estrangement, the German word for this is *Entfremdung*, and as self-objectification or *Entäußerung*. In what follows I will use the English term alienation for both senses of the word unless the context is ambiguous, in which case I will specify the sense by placing the German term in square brackets after the term appears in English.

which cannot be adequately dealt with here and which are beyond the scope of the present thesis. For example, what one thinker may regard as a crisis, such as a war, another may regard as a necessary social cleansing. Or what one may regard as an unfortunate breakdown in traditional self-understandings, another might well regard as the dawn of a new liberation (I am thinking here of the Italian Futurists). Nevertheless, it should become clear in what follows that at the very least, Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche all theorised with a sense of desperate urgency. Each held that their own ideas were governed by a sense that their own time was one of ever deepening crisis. Yet, Hegel's own political philosophy, whether we agree with him or not, has a calmness and a repose which appears to be in keeping with the goals of spiritual reconciliation which was so much a part of his particular project.⁸ On the other hand, even Hegel's political theory arose from a very troubling and difficult engagement with the events that occurred during the French Revolution, so I will discuss this anomaly during the course of the chapters on Hegel.

As we shall see, for Hegel there was a desperate need to preserve the freedom and truth of the French Revolution in the face of reaction and anarchy. In the example of Stirner there was a sense in which the potential possessiveness of Ego identity was being undermined by any number of vacuous and competing ideologies, or alienation's, of the period. Marx, for his part, certainly believed that capitalism was in its final death agonies since it had created the harbingers of its own demise in the *proletariat*, and finally, Nietzsche believed that the last dying gasp of the Christian World view was eliminating all that was excellent in life and that a paralysing mediocrity was to be found almost every where, a mediocrity which could only be reversed by lawgivers and leaders of a new kind, individuals who were authentic in every sense. The apparently highly personalised attachment to notions of impending doom and crisis is the eschatological world view which was produced by the *Phenomenology of Spirit* writ large, and all this despite Hegel's efforts to find Reason in modernity.⁹ In short, after Hegel the focus of political philosophy becomes concerned with the legitimacy of critique itself. Thus an *implicit* theme of this thesis will be the legitimacy of critique and the relation of critique to that of the eschatological understandings we find here.

⁸ See Plant, 1988, for a concise account of Hegel's attempt to reconcile modern individuals and Christianity.

⁹ I will discuss Hegel's notion of Reason in a little more detail in other Chapters, however, the most important point is that Reason is that faculty which openly serves human destiny and when, therefore, history ceases to have an independent existence.

Most of the important studies which have already covered this ground, such as Sidney Hook's *From Hegel to Marx*,¹⁰ and particularly the 'secularisation thesis' proposed by Karl Löwith's *From Hegel to Nietzsche*,¹¹ have become seriously dated through no fault of the authors. For example, who today would agree with Löwith's rather Freudian assertion concerning Marx that "the real driving force behind [his] conception is a transparent messianism which has its own unconscious root in [his] own being, even in his own race. He was a Jew of Old Testament stature,"...¹² To be sure, Löwith's attempt to trace what he called the "self-dissolution of the Hegelian spirit"¹³ was a milestone in the history of ideas but it was also a product of the times, where the most pressing concern facing scholars was the need to sever philosophy away from the Nazis and the Fascists. Löwith's mature thought, for example, has affinities with the cyclical thought of the Stoics and his rejection of eschatology *per se* and Hegelianism was fuelled by the appalling events of the period. In a real sense then, Löwith throws the baby of Hegelian eschatology out with the bath water of eschatology more generally.¹⁴ Marx's political philosophy, for example, may well be messianic in *some sense* but few would hold that this sense is 'transparently obvious'¹⁵ As one recent commentator has even suggested, these two works have produced a "teleological straight-jacket" in the history of ideas.¹⁶

In any case, almost every age has at least some faction, group, class or elite who believe that their own time is one of political social and/or moral crisis. One only has to briefly reflect on our own time. Aside from the kind of 'Spenglerian' doomsday scenarios which posit the end of human life in some kind of cataclysm, such as have emerged from some elements of the ecology movement and the apocalyptic cosmologists, there are religious cultists and millennialists of all kinds. Most sophisticated of all, there are also the many versions of post-modern end-

¹⁰ Hook, 1976.

¹¹ Löwith, 1991.

¹² Marx, 1988, p177.

¹³ Löwith, 1994, p52.

¹⁴ Also, see Löwith, 1995.

¹⁵ Despite the similarities with Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 1986, I would like to stress that these are purely superficial similarities of subject matter. Unlike Popper I do not believe that there is any necessary connection between Hegel, Marx and totalitarianism. See Popper, 1986, p59 where he says, "In our time, Hegel's hysterical historicism is still the fertiliser to which modern totalitarianism owes its growth". While Popper adopts a 'positivist' critique of Hegel and Marx, see Popper, 1986, p193, my own critique comes from within the idealist tradition which Hegel and Marx subscribed to. Thus Popper's critique of Marx's prophecies, for example, Popper, 1986, p280, are based on what he considers to be Marx's economic determinism, while my own is more concerned with the similarities between Marx's own analysis and the tradition of the religious thought of the period. Thus my own project is completely different from Popper's, as are my conclusions.

¹⁶ See Toews, 1980, p2.

times which predict some kind of social catastrophe, or at the very least, the inevitable disintegration of rational global processes.

According to the contemporary Italian theorist Gianni Vattimo for example, *post-histoire* denotes the process of strangulation and ultimate emasculation of the *avant-garde* of modernity. It is the process in which progress becomes routine, and paradoxically, a time of innovational degradation. While the speed of technological and aesthetic development increases, a qualitative change occurs where, although newer products are always possible, the sheer capacity for rapid global marketing, planning, creation and distribution renders everything less new. Modernity then, according to this view, is a crisis in which nothing has the power to shock and where even irreverence becomes *passé*.¹⁷

The post-modernist, Jean Baudrillard, arrives at conclusions somewhat similar to Vattimo's, but for different reasons. According to Baudrillard, media-stoked consumption has taken over from social production as the key locus or engine of social change, a social change which is becoming progressively more ephemeral. For Baudrillard, the endless operation and exploration of 'signs' remains one of the few existential possibilities left open to a global population paralysed with cynicism.¹⁸ Such crises allegedly render both theories of classical Marxism and Weberianism obsolete. Alan Ryan, for example, has recently suggested,

...late capitalism now has the effect of creating cultural possibilities that have become detached from the realm of economic necessity and there is no longer any logically extra-discursive determination by any pre-cultural substance,...¹⁹

Thus in contemporary terms, notions of individual cynicism and or existential exhaustion before great structural forces seems to underpin and reproduce these same structures.

The most important point to make regarding the *modern* in the modern thought of all the thinkers considered here, is that where they may appear to anticipate such contemporary debates quite often, rather, there is some notion that individual autonomy is usurped or frustrated by any number of apparent

¹⁷See Bellamy, 1987, pp. 727-733.

¹⁸See Vidich, Baudrillard's "America: Lost in the Ultimate Simulacrum", *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol 8, 1991.

¹⁹See Ryan, *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol 15, 1988.

necessities. In other words, freedom, or some version of self-actualisation, is compromised by necessary entailments which, if only some other view could be made to prevail, would prove to be merely contingent. This sense of 'if only', the notion that going on behind the back of modern subjects there is the suspension of truly human possibilities, is an important assumption of moderns such as Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche. This idea of potentially whole individuals who are struggling to become whole as such, has been referred to as the assumption of the centred-subject of the Enlightenment. While I feel unable to commit to this notion with the same certainty as the Enlightenment thinkers did, this notion will underpin these discussions throughout since my desire is to engage with these political philosophers on their own terms. Unlike the notions of crisis which underpin post-modern thinking, where there is no longer any apparent reason to believe in a meta-narrative subject or freedom, modernity, understood in this sense, clings to some notion of either self-actualisation or personal authenticity or in some kind of centred-subject.

As we shall see, in the case of Hegel's classical Christian account of modernity, the eschatological agency of social change is already immanent in Rational Law and the Modern State. But in Stirner's thought it is transcendence towards the social agency of the *lumpenproletariat* who will bring the new dawn of Egoism, for Marx it is the new industrial *proletariat* and according to Nietzsche, the task of real change will fall to the *Übermensch*. That this distinction between Hegel and the others may appear obvious is in large measure due to the enduring success and influence of Hegel's method and the domination of the transcendence reading over the immanence reading.

Finally, my turn towards the study of nihilism and of a secularised eschatology might seem surprising given the fashionable recrudescence of alienation literature in the latter half of our own century. However, it should be noted that this recent concern with alienation, and especially within the context of Marxist theory, was born on the wings of the recondite elements of a particular Marx. In other words, the recent concern with alienation was largely prompted by the historical discovery of new manuscripts, it was not an interpretative phenomenon or inspired by some new turn of historical events.²⁰ This is not to suggest that the more contemporary concern with the nature of nihilism is, in the final analysis, an empirical matter either, rather, the point is that the historical and developmental

²⁰For example, in this regard see the story of the discovery of Marx's "1844" manuscripts as recounted by Lukàc's in his "autobiography".

condition of global capitalism, or new social processes more generally, no more justifies this recent concern with alienation than those conditions that were abroad when this term first entered into the philosophical and political lexicon of the time. In other words, there is no reason to believe that the term alienation was more valuable to the sociological and philosophical imagination in the year 1968 than it was in 1844, the two dates often considered most replete with meaning when one considers the concept of alienation. Rather, my decision to look for a concern with nihilism in the political philosophers considered here was initially informed by the challenge of the Nietzschean project to radically re-cast the entire history of the Western tradition.

The Purpose and Structure of this Work

I hope that that this thesis might make a modest contribution to the on-going debate among students and scholars of Hegel alike, as to the contemporary relevance of Hegel's work as a whole. This debate has changed little since Hegel's own day, a debate in which scholars continue to be divided as to whether or not Hegel had produced a system worth defending, or if his 'dialectical method' can be successfully extended beyond his own conclusions. Andries Sarlemijn, for example, has remarked that an adherence to a Marxist reading of Hegel usually leads to a disparagement of Hegel's system and an admiration only of the method.²¹

Within the context of Hegel studies this work might be seen as an attempt to defend a kind of 'right' Hegelianism against 'left' Hegelianism. For example, it is a commonplace of Hegel studies to note that the 'left' or Young Hegelian movement is characterised in the work of Strauss, Feuerbach, the Bauer brothers, and by Stirner, Marx and Engels. These Young Hegelians hold that most of Hegel's thought is conservative or immanent but that Hegel's 'dialectical method' transcends his own historical milieu and points the epistemological way forward towards the discovery of deep social and political freedoms. In stark contrast to this, the 'right' or Old Hegelians, such as the collaborators on the first edition of Hegel's collected works, Ph. Marheineke, J.P. Schulze, E.Gans, L.v. Henning, H. Hotho, C.L. Michelet and F. Forster, take the view that Hegel describes a complete system which has effectively integrated all the most important elements of modernity and which has successfully reconciled these with modern philosophy. The reputation of the first group has traditionally rested upon a series of stunning books which attacked the very basis of Christian theology, and the second has rested, much less dramatically, upon the production of extensive editorial work, lecture notes and a number of biographical and conservative monographs. However, I do not want to follow this old debate too closely since I am aware of the dangers of submitting to such a historical polarisation and of the history of other efforts to conclusively settle this debate. Benedetto Croce, for example, once humorously noted the many "lamentable" attempts to re-interpret Hegel's 'dialectical method'. Of Hegel's disciples he says,

²¹ See Sarlemijn, 1975, p10.

One of them dialecticized spirit as the masculine principle, nature as the feminine, and history as the matrimonial union. Another found in the Oriental world, the category of being; in the classical world, the category of essence; and in the modern world the category of the concept.... and in the ancient world, Athens was made to correspond with dynamic electricity, Sparta with static electricity, Macedonia with electro-magnetism....²²

By way of avoiding this apparent Hegelian law of diminishing returns I would like to add two important caveats to all of this. In the first place I am not suggesting that 'right' Hegelianism is the correct philosophical position. That would be a claim which is far too large for a thesis of this length. Secondly, I am not even claiming that 'right' Hegelianism is more philosophically correct than 'left' Hegelianism, similarly too large, this debate has raged for many years and is likely to rage for many more to come. Rather, I am suggesting a reading which offers one reason for preferring an engagement with Hegel's whole system, rather than the so-called transcendent dialectical readings of Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche [although convention normally dictates that Nietzsche was not a 'left' Hegelian].

This question regarding the contemporary relevance of Hegel is particularly important given his own pronouncement in the *Philosophy of Right* that .. "the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk".²³ Are Hegel's, apparently reformist views, descriptive or normative for example? The term 'reformist' indicates that despite the tone of that work it remains in some sense normative. However, it should become clear in what follows that I take Hegel's moderate political liberalism to be *almost* entirely descriptive. Thus, my reading of Hegel suggests that he is both a political philosopher and a political theorist but not a normative or prophetic thinker. One can, of course, be a respectable normative thinker without being prophetic, there is a very great difference between a political project which legitimately argues that a new set of values or standards *should be* adopted and a project which claims to be able to accurately predict some new coming world-order. One implication of the present thesis is that my own research suggests that while all the post-Hegelians thinkers in question engaged in both descriptive and normative thinking none of them had a reason to think as richly or as deeply as Hegel himself did on what was 'modern' about our modern institutions. Furthermore, when they did think on Hegel's own terrain,

²² See Croce, 1915, p208.

²³ Hegel, 1991, p23.

they took flight from conventional normative thinking in any case and engaged in the drama of prophecy. I shall demonstrate that the effect of all of this is that Hegel's political theory now looks relatively contemporary, while the eschatological visions of the former, while retaining their original fire and excitement, now look strangely dated.

One of the most difficult problems of the relations between political philosophy and political theory is the identification of the necessary from the merely contingent. Which elements of a political theory are bound and constrained by the nature of a particular philosophical system and which are not? (Leaving aside for the time being the question of what is 'true'). This is no moot point in the case of Hegel since one recent scholar,²⁴ taking his cue from Deconstruction, has argued that one can criticise Hegel's dialectic through the Deconstruction of his views on the family since Hegel makes claims and allows "aporias" which exceed his system. Thus according to this view Hegel speaks for and against himself, a fact which leads eventually to the decomposition of the whole Hegelian system.

Take, for example, the role of the state and then quite separately, that of women, in Hegel's own thought. Clearly the developing alienation and objectification of the state 'form' from the period of the dissolution of Greek ethical life to that of Roman Law, feudal bonds, and then through absolutism to the modern state, is a necessary development in the journey of *Geist* in Hegel's thought. The modern state is, in Hegel's schema, not some contingent element but the very objectification of the spirit of freedom and modern subjectivism itself. In the quite separate case of women: they embody and symbolise the ethereal quality of the nether world. According to Hegel, women intuitively grasp the essential nature of the blood bonds of the family,

Woman....has her substantial vocation in the family, and her ethical disposition consists in piety.

Furthermore,

The difference between man and woman is the difference between animal and plant; the animal is closer in character to man, the

²⁴ See the essay by Critchley, in Barnett, 1998.

plant to woman, for the latter is a more peaceful unfolding whose principle is the more indeterminate unity of feeling.²⁵

While the state has proved to have an enduring role in our lives in a manner recognisably mapped out by Hegel, and clearly the development of the state is 'work on the world' or 'Spirit objectified', this necessary entailment is hardly true in the quite separate case of women. Indeed, the former phenomenon we view as inevitable while the assertion that women have essential affinities with 'vegetable' matter now provokes justifiable outrage. Going even further than this, David F. Krell has argued that in Hegel's treatment of Schlegel's novel *Lucinde* [in the *Philosophy of Right*], a novel thought to be a scandal in Hegel's own time, Hegel is demonstrably shaken by this libertine book which undermines his conception of marriage and religion, again ultimately threatening Hegel's entire system.²⁶ Hegel, it is alleged, had not perceived that the depths of modern subjectivity which prevailed in his own time regarding the capacities of men, would come to be shared by the women of our time. In this example, it is argued, Hegel was quite clearly wrong, that which he appeared to identify as necessary is in fact contingent.

For most of the last one hundred and sixty years or so since Hegel's death it has been far from obvious that Hegel's liberalism would continue to command our attention since his own variety would seem to epitomise the kind of ethical, as opposed to instrumental liberalism, which has become dominant today.²⁷ In addition, while liberalism has always had its staunch defenders, libertarianism, anarchism, Marxism, post-structuralism, feminism and depth ecology have produced a serious theoretical and practical challenge at one time or another to that of liberalism, especially the so-called ethical variety. A liberalism which is often perceived by such movements to be as much a part of the problem as a means to a solution. In any case, that debate forms the background and provides another motivation for my selection of Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche in this study. The seminal texts of each of these thinkers has always been used as a primary source for these traditions respectively. Libertarian anarchism in the case of Stirner, communism from Marx and finally post-structuralism in the case of Nietzsche.

I will argue in Chapters I and II of this thesis that while Hegel found an imaginative philosophical solution to the manifest alienation of humanity, as he understood it, he also discovered there a deeper and much more terrifying

²⁵Hegel, 1991 pp.206-7.

²⁶ See Krell in Cornell et al, 1991. I am paraphrasing from the editors introduction, pxvi.

²⁷ See Bellamy, 1992, for an account of this allegedly necessary transition.

manifestation of the modern "Spirit". This is why I claim in Chapter II that within the *Phenomenology of Spirit* there is a special place reserved where this deep ambiguity first appears, the section entitled "Absolute Freedom and Terror". This discovery, the spiritual moment of complete freedom and the symbolic nemesis of the same, the Thermidor of the French Revolution, shook Hegel to the core. The problem of how to understand the Revolution was to stay with him even up to the period of the *Philosophy of Right*.

More importantly, I shall argue that Hegel's historical analysis of alienation [Entäußerung] remained a largely religious conception which he regarded as part and parcel of the intrinsic structure of the Holy Trinity more generally. In the movement of Hegel's thought, through the structure from "Self-alienated Culture" to the French Revolution and to a new Spirit which is "Self-Certain" [These are Chapter titles taken from his *Phenomenology*], although a major triumph over alienation [Entfremdung], also contained within the nihilist turning point which appeared to also undermine the grounding of his new arrangement or "shape" of history more generally.

On the other hand, according to the 'left' Hegelians, the peculiar Hegelian 'arrangement' of time is not something which is understood as the cessation of history and the completion of the system but as a new 'becoming' which will only end when humanity enjoys a particular form of reconciliation, one in which the liberty of the mind is not contradicted by any deeper reality and where Reason is in command of all social structures. In short the new "shape" of history is when history itself ceases to have an independent existence, according to the 'left' Hegelians.²⁸ In the case of philosophy, Marx, following Stirner, estimated that this liberty ultimately signified the end of philosophy, for in the political arena it denotes an unceasing requirement for an institutional abolition from which there can be no escape. This vision of a kind of 'political negativity', we shall discover, is deeply wedded to his rejection of Hegel's religious account of the new 'arrangement'.

Not-with-standing Marx's critique of German political life, we know that Hegel was also highly critical of the political alternatives of his own day, although often for very different reasons than those of his contemporaries. Interestingly, although Hegel is generally considered to follow in the 'natural law' tradition of Grotius, Pufendorf and Hume, his philosophical approach to history differed substantially from many of these. For example, in his Preface to the second edition of

²⁸ See Norman, 1976. p132, here I am paraphrasing from Norman.

his *Encyclopaedia*, Vol I (1827), Hegel described the enlightened harmony of natural law theory, the modern state together with the needs of religion as that time “not long gone by” which was both superficial and contradictory.²⁹ In other words, this apparent harmony was exposed for what it was during the events of the French Revolution, an immature manifestation of modernity’s new capacities for freedom.

Hegel also doubted the practical efficacy and explanatory power of early contractarian theories of natural law, as in the case of Rousseau's utopian escape from modern complexity. If by ‘natural rights’ we mean to suggest that ‘rights’ are those things which we possess by nature, “men are born free but are every where in chains”, then Hegel could scarcely agree with such a formula, since such ‘natural rights’ depend on a teleology of nature which is inclusive of human beings, in the full sense. But as Hegel pointed out often enough, animals have neither rights nor a conception of good and bad since they do not have freedom. Similarly, in his discussion of property Hegel did not believe that this was a natural right since “One cannot speak of an injustice in the unequal distribution of possessions and resources, for nature is not free and is therefore neither just nor unjust”. While he held that “everyone ought to have property”, for example, this was based on their capacities for freedom at “source”, in other words, it was a universal capacity which was not universally realisable³⁰ According to Hegel’s more mature reflections on the French Revolution, the Declaration of the ‘Rights of Man’ simultaneously undermined the actual rights of man because these remained abstract. In this sense there is nothing ‘natural’ about Hegelian ‘rights’. Rights, rather, are the result of the what Hegel called, ‘the labour of the negative’, they are the historical product of the long process of Christian ‘positivity’, thus they remain an alienation, here Hegel anticipates Marx.

Here we arrive at one of the most difficult aspects of Hegel's phenomenological account of ‘rights’. If he did not subscribe to the traditional conception of natural law in the conventional sense then what did he offer in its stead? The answer is often that he proposed what commentators refer to as the ‘absolute standpoint’, a notion of some kind of standard which was to be used to adjudicate between different knowledge claims. But such an ‘absolute’ only serves to raise even more troublesome problems, for if there is some kind of universal standard, some reasonable procedural invention which can be used to settle political disputes then why do we continue to see the bloody aspects of political conflict?

²⁹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia*, 1991, p5.

³⁰ Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, 1991, pp.80-1.

While such questions pose no particular problems for the Young Hegelians such as Stirner, who held that all human interactions were essentially struggles of a political nature, or for Marx, who believed in the redemptive inevitability of class conflict, or even for Nietzsche, with his rejuvenation of the *Agon* [Gk. *contest*], the problem of continual social conflict certainly appears to be a problem for Hegel, especially since there is supposed to be some kind of reconciliation entailed in his project. We may also recall that Hegel himself certainly struggled to find solutions for the divisive problem of poverty and the associated underclass or "rabble" in his *Philosophy of Right*.³¹ However, while an answer to this question is beyond the scope and space of the present work I would suggest that such a criticism of Hegel's *political* thought is based upon a misunderstanding of the notion of 'reconciliation' in Hegel's *philosophical* thought.

Of course, if one holds that the apparently insoluble political problems of our own time are determined by certain ineluctable philosophical premises, that is to say, determined by certain ontological presuppositions, then one would not expect to see the resolution of political conflict in any case. Is it fair to expect that an 'absolute standpoint' should resolve such difficulties? Is it fair to ask this of Hegel's *Phenomenology*? One might well hold, for example, that the apparent inexhaustible well of human needs (and difference), pre-supposed by a conception of animal rapacity, ensures that some form of political conflict must always endure? Similarly, it beholds those who posit some notion of ultimate social harmony to find ways towards this harmony. I do not detect any such need in Hegel's thought on either count. On the other hand, what if the 'absolute standpoint' is not a position of unity but one of absolute difference or unity-in-difference?³² In Hegel's concept of 'civil society', and one should note that this a much wider notion in Hegel's thought than in Marx's, one can see an outline of an enduring battleground of competing needs which is not incompatible with this kind of idea, especially since 'civil society' for Hegel, remained only one element of three in the structure of his religious thought.

Returning to the central themes of this thesis for a moment, to religion and modernity: if by 'Christian' one means to designate one who holds to a belief system and a view of time which is essentially wedded to scripture and to the form of the Christian Bible, then it is argued here that the period following Hegel should be regarded as 'post-historical' time, since this is also post-Christian, for it is the period

³¹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia*, 1991, pp.266-7.

³² This was certainly the understanding of the 'absolute' which was held by early Scottish Hegelians such as James Frederick Ferrier (1808-1864), for example, see his "Biography of Hegel", Ferrier, 1866.

after the death of scripture. Further, and this is the more important point, each of the so-called 'post-historical' philosophers considered, again except Hegel himself, subscribed to an atheized political eschatology which mirrored the structure of the religious thought which they had so vehemently left behind. Thus, paradoxically, as I have already suggested, I shall argue that the expressions or forms of political crisis and agency under consideration are necessarily shaped by these same overpowering tropes of a secularised eschatology.

In this study I have only chosen to discuss two of the 'left' Hegelians, Stirner and Marx. Conventional approaches such as those of Löwith, Hook and McLellan will run through the long list of all those who subscribed at one time or another to this movement. I have chosen not to do this not only because of the very real considerations of space but also because few of the 'left' Hegelians were to convert their eschatological grasp of Hegel directly into *political* prophecy. Each sensed that their own time had irrevocably changed, to be sure, but not all accepted this with equal zeal or consistency and often they were to become politically conservative or, as in the case of Feuerbach, adopt a kind of bourgeois liberal existentialism. While there is no necessary link between holding eschatological views and having prophetic visions, I do claim in this thesis that once a peculiar eschatological structure is adopted, which I shall outline in section I of this Introduction, then the prophetic renunciation of political theory would appear to be the final result in the cases considered.

Though Ludwig Feuerbach, for example, was concerned with the nature of alienation and nihilism he ultimately embraced the 'material' of the world and believed that humanity could take its cue from the meaning inherent in such 'material'.³³ In his anthropological critique of philosophy *per se* Feuerbach replaced not only religion, but also philosophy with a radicalised sensuous rationality. In Feuerbach's almost Heideggerian deconstruction of Hegelian philosophy, this sensuous rationality replaces nihilism with Being, thus he says, "The index finger is the signpost from nothingness to Being"³⁴ However, as we shall see, what was only an "index finger" for Feuerbach becomes something much greater in the case studies of Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche.

Following Löwith, I have chosen Max Stirner as my first 'post-historical' thinker because he is the first political philosopher to face nihilism squarely and who

³³ Feuerbach, 1986, p67.

³⁴ Feuerbach, 1986, p61.

chose to remain with the startling implications of that nihilism rather than force some kind of philosophical retreat. Nevertheless, on first approaching Stirner he appears, rather deceptively, to be the least political of the three, yet paradoxically, his ideas have justifiably provided a deep well of inspiration for both 'right' and 'left' libertarians. In Chapter III I will re-examine Stirner's radical notions of crisis and individual political agency in his book, *The Ego and Its Own*, to try and discover why, as Löwith has argued, Stirner begins the German obsession with nihilism.

It might also appear surprising at first glance that one should associate Marx's political thought with nihilism rather than alienation, given that in early essays such as *On The Jewish Question* he held that *political* emancipation is but a partial step on the road towards full *human* emancipation. The former being only the latest expression of an essentially alienated condition. Indeed, even in his mature work such as the first volume of *Capital*, we see that the most basic units of analysis, such as commodities and money, are also fetishized manifestations of a deeply alienated consciousness. Yet intermingled with these reflections we also see in Marx an over-arching concern with the nature and basis for political struggle and the ends of life. A discourse which seems to be very much concerned with questions of meaning and disenchantment. Two texts exemplify this phenomena, *The German Ideology* and *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

Finally, in Chapter V I will turn to Nietzsche, as I have said, not typically considered to be a member of the Young Hegelians. Indeed Nietzsche was born in the same year as Stirner composed *The Ego and Its Own* [1844]. Yet, although of a different generation there remains something deeply Young Hegelian about Nietzsche's thought. His concerns were their concerns and his assumptions were their assumptions, the critique of Hegel, the death of God, the meaninglessness and disenchantment of modernity and the project of affecting a shift in historical consciousness, were elements of Nietzsche's thought at some point or other. Furthermore, Nietzsche takes eschatological prophecy much further than any of the others, since for him, prophecy, almost hysterically delivered, becomes his preferred *modus operandi*.

It is the hope of the author that this study may help to place the great millennial projects of the last century into a more humbling perspective. As this century comes to a close the need to place the overblown claims of prophetic

political philosophy, more generally, within its millennialist context has never been greater.³⁵

On a stylistic note; I make no apology for the frequent use of chapter and section epigrams in this thesis since there are primarily used as a device to convey something of the broad range of opinion and concern with matters of eschatology, alienation and nihilism by these same founding figures of modern Western political philosophy. A fact that I believe to be under represented in the secondary literature.

However, before we move on to these Chapters and the opening Chapters on Hegel, I would like to clarify my sense of some of these contestable and allegedly 'unphilosophical' terms, I begin first with the concept of 'religious eschatology' then 'alienation', before finally turning to the notion of 'nihilism'.

³⁵ The theme of secularised eschatology is not new and has been recognised by others, see Stepelevich, p7, for example.

I have convinced myself by experience of the truth of the biblical text which I have made my guiding light: "Strive ye first after food and clothing, and the Kingdom of God will fall to you as well" [reversal of Matthew 6:33].³⁶

Hegel to von Knebel, Bamberg, August 30, 1807

It is only from heaven, i.e., from the will of the French Emperor, that matters can be set in motion,...³⁷

Hegel to Niethammer, Bamberg, February 11, 1808

II

A Review of Religious Eschatology

Philosophical eschatology begins anew with Hegel because it is he who most effectively transcribes our modern predicament from the Judeo-Christian tradition.³⁸ In a sophisticated version of the ontological argument for the belief in God, Hegel holds that God's consciousness logically requires an engagement with 'otherness', thus an understanding of God's embodiment in the other suggests also an understanding of God as well.³⁹ As Hegel himself said,

...it follows that God can be known or cognised, for it is God's nature to reveal himself, to be manifest. Those who say that God is not revelatory do not speak from the [standpoint of the] Christian at any rate, for the Christian religion is called the revealed religion. Its content is that God is revealed to human beings, that they know what God is.⁴⁰

All of this suggests to Hegel that our modern expressions of alienation are revealed by theology in the first instance before being cognitively grasped by philosophy. As Raymond Plant has commented, of Hegel's early Bern and Frankfurt period,

³⁶Hegel, 1984, p142.

³⁷Ibid, 1984, p159.

³⁸ Again, see Plant, 1988, for a concise statement of this position.

³⁹ Ibid, 1988, paraphrasing from Plant.

⁴⁰ Ibid, quoted in Plant, 1988, p35.

It is important to notice, though, that at this stage he is not writing as a philosopher, seeking to set Christianity into a wider interpretation of human existence as he was later to do; rather he is acting as a kind of cultural critic seeing what scope there might be for the transformation of Christianity.⁴¹

Prophets, by definition, inspire and found religious belief systems and in early German Idealism many writers flirted with the idea of founding a new religion so I will begin this study with a brief outline of religious eschatology in very general terms.⁴² The framework of Hegel's notion of "Absolute Knowing",⁴³ for example, has a long eschatological⁴⁴ pedigree. Theologians typically make an important distinction between 'prophetic' eschatology and 'apocalyptic' eschatology in the Judeo-Christian tradition.⁴⁵ The former of these traditions would normally envision God accomplishing divine plans within a frame of reference which is mediated by human history and agency. Often such prophetic writing entails some kind of Judgement day, where the enemies of God would be punished and the faithful saved. The latter, on the other hand, always employ supernatural forces to bring about the divine plan and also, unlike the former, such plans usually entail redemption of a supernatural variety, such as the fortuitous escape to a future paradise or some kind of new world order.

In prophecy, as opposed to apocalypse, hope resides in the terrestrial, in the imaginative powers of a just settlement in this world. Where as in the apocalyptic literature, hope is found in the strength of the belief in future deliverance.⁴⁶ Also important is the distinctive difference between the method of delivery of each of these thought structures. Prophecy is more often an inspired call

⁴¹ Ibid, 1988, p16.

⁴² Perhaps the most famous example of a new apocalyptic religious manifesto, is the disputed "Oldest Systematic Programme" fragment, which calls for a "new religion" of "freedom and equality of spirits", see Beiser, 1996, p5.

⁴³ In this thesis I will use a number of Hegelianisms more or less interchangeably, such as "Absolute Knowing", 'absolute standpoint', 'privileged standpoint' and "philosophical historian", some of these were used by Hegel and some by later commentators. The important point is that each attempts to characterise a position from which retrospectively informed judgements might be made. Sometimes such judgements are epistemological, some times ontological and sometimes historical.

⁴⁴ See Reddish, Abingdon, 1995, p19, "Eschatology" literally means teachings about the last things, such as the opening line of the book of Revelation, "I am the Alpha and omega...who is and who was and who is to come", 1:8, this is also the end of history as described by Boethius in Bk 5 of his Consolation of Philosophy.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 1995, p20.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 1995, p19, the Greek word apokalypsis means revelation. The Apocalypse Group of the Bible Society of Biblical Literature Genres Project, defined an apocalypse as follows, "Apocalypse" is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation and spatial as it involves another, supernatural world, p20.

to the faithful from some strong and undaunted human agent, where as in the case of the apocalypticist, the dream or vision is brought to the dreamer by an angel or unearthly power. Thus, as Mitchell G. Reddish has pointed out, the apocalyptic form,

...involves both a horizontal and vertical (or temporal and spatial) dimensions.⁴⁷

Strictly speaking then, in theological terms, Hegel's understanding of the revealed religion is a prophetic vision rather than an apocalyptic one. However, in one important sense, Hegel's thought does remain apocalyptic rather than prophetic, since the former is almost always part of the reconciliation, rather than the protest tradition.

Nevertheless, there is a further important sub-division to be made between the different genres of prophetic literature. On the one hand, there is the first kind of vision in which the visionary is taken on a journey to the world of the dead. Here there are often visions of the new world where the wicked are being punished, tortures are being meted out and where the just catch some glimpse of the heavens which await. In such literature there is often a stark contrast between the chaos of life on earth and the order, stability and control which God exerts in the heavens. The literature of this first stamp seeks to reassure.

In visions of the second kind there are no journeys to the heavens and there is often more stress upon the horizontal or temporal nature of the message, accompanied by signs that things are drawing to a close, such as those given by great wars and cataclysms of nature.⁴⁸ This is an attempt to encourage a different vision of the world and while, in the final analysis, such 'end times' are driven by God's will, these writings usually amount to nothing less than a symbolic protest against the established order,⁴⁹ in addition, various messianic forms may accompany and be interwoven into both kinds of prophecy. That is, often the coming 'kingdom of God' is thought to be coeval with some incarnation of God, a Christ figure or Master of Light. In any case, two key characteristics of this second kind of literature are first; the *ex eventu* nature of the prophecy, that is, prophecy after the fact, and secondly, the prophet is usually pseudonymous. Hegel's understanding of the 'revealed religion', although reconciliatory, like apocalyptic religious writing, is

⁴⁷ Ibid, 1995, p21.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 1995, p22.

⁴⁹ Luke, 21.

more like writing of this second kind, it has some of the characteristics of the vertical type, and the horizontal type.

However, Hegel's "Absolute Knowing" often appears more prophetic literature than apocalyptic since it has all the characteristics of a specific historically determined *ex eventu* prophecy. As I shall demonstrate, Hegel's retrospective revelation of alienation was *ex eventu* because it was dependent upon the historical cataclysms of the past, such as the 'spiritual' collapse of Greece, Rome and upon the adventures of the French Revolution. (It is also worth noting that Hegel always played down his own authorial specificity, but this is not a line of argument which can be pursued here). In any event, this is hardly a novel characterisation of Hegel's thought since Alexandre Kojève argues, for example, that the inspiration behind "Absolute Knowing" was provided by Napoleon, the ... "world soul on horseback".⁵⁰ In a famous passage in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* it is alleged that Hegel characterised this eschatological duality in the following text, among others,

In my *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which on that account was at its publication described as the first part of the System of Philosophy, the method adopted was to begin with the first and simplest phase of mind, immediate consciousness, and to show how that stage gradually of necessity worked onward to the philosophical point of view, *the necessity of that view being proved by the process* [my emphasis].⁵¹

In other words, the important point is that only once the process *has already completed itself*, Napoleon aside, can the proper point of view be brought forth to Self-Consciousness, in Hegel's account. Before we move on to consider specific examples of prophetic literature one final point should be made, that is, prophetic literature is usually produced either during a period of crisis or while there is a perception of a crisis,⁵² and related to this, prophetic literature is almost always a literature of resistance and struggle which provides an alternative world view to the oppressed and like full blown apocalyptic literature, there is often the hope of some future reconciliation.⁵³

Christian eschatology appears to contain only one true apocalypse, the Book of Revelation, but this is not the case with prophetic writing.⁵⁴ In the New

⁵⁰Hegel, 1984, p114.

⁵¹Hegel, 1975, pps 45-6.

⁵²Reddish, 1995, p24.

⁵³Ibid, 1995, p26.

⁵⁴Ibid, 1995, p30.

Testament the coming of Armageddon is another example of this kind of formulation.⁵⁵ Prophetic eschatology is all pervasive in the New Testament, as in the parables of Jesus⁵⁶ or according to the letters of the apostle Paul,⁵⁷ these are also often closer to the *ex eventu* form of prophecy where there is no other-worldly journey in the vision and the bringer of the good news is an earthly figure. Jesus of Nazareth, for example, prior to his resurrection is presented as a flesh-and-blood man.⁵⁸ His role is to explain and reinterpret the law as already given.

Nevertheless, there is a great deal of structural ambiguity between apocalyptic and prophetic literature. Indeed, Jesus and St Paul seem to be caught somewhere between both prophecy and apocalypse, for example, both of these religious figures appear to have been convinced that God sought to bring about the end of all terrestrial life.⁵⁹ While in the Pauline writings the 'coming' is often asserted simply as a litmus test of belief, the apocalyptic writings of the book of Revelation, for example, are truly cataclysmic and messianic. Here the oppressive power of "Gog and Magog" must be defeated before the "kingdom of God" can reign. Symbolically, this reign is projected forward to a time when Satan is ... "bound for a thousand years" by an angel bearing a key to a ... "bottomless pit and a great chain".⁶⁰ The ... "first resurrection" is held to be the beginning of this thousand year reign in which Satan is incarcerated and the second coming⁶¹ or ... "second death" marks the release of Satan from his shackles to face God for one final decisive battle. The kingdom of God is attested to when the false prophet and the devil are cast into the ... "lake of fire and brimstone" and ... "tormented day and night". This then is the essence of the final Judgement; salvation is at hand for those who accept the truth of the revelation and endless torment and suffering for those who don't.⁶² In other words, the role of prophetic apocalypse is to garner and judge based upon the strength of belief in the future deliverance.

One common theme throughout these religious texts is the idea of some kind of spiritual re-birth (of becoming), where belief in the divine nature of such predictions is often followed by a new commitment to immerse oneself in the true

⁵⁵Revelation, 16:14-16.

⁵⁶See Mark, 1:14, 13, Luke 21 and the chapters often referred to as the 'little apocalypse', Matt, 24-25.

⁵⁷See two passages from Paul's letters, I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, also I Corinthians, 4:14, 6:9.

⁵⁸Paraphrasing Reddish, 1995, p31.

⁵⁹See Stepelevich, 1987, p 98, this was also Feuerbach's understanding.

⁶⁰See Revelations, 20: 1-10.

⁶¹See John 14:3, and Hebrews, 9:28.

⁶²See Mark, 3:26 and 14:25 where, at the last supper or Passover, Jesus predicts that the wine which passes his lips is his last before entering the "kingdom of God".

meaning of the message while freeing oneself from terrestrial temptations of one sort or another, and thereby creating a new form of self-consciousness. Christian asceticism becomes a basic model of consciousness raising, for example, in Hegel's modern subjects, a modern incarnation of the religious spirit that Nietzsche found particularly disturbing. This is also the structural framework for a thought project which understands cataclysm as the dawning of an age of hope and as a grounding for a new beginning that all will inevitably adhere to. Typically, enslavement provides the community with meaning through which to understand and interpret sufferings, whether earthly or spiritual.

Judaic scripture contains only one apocalypse, the Book of Daniel. This is the classical form of prophetic apocalypse as a pseudonymous *ex eventu* prophecy. Although this work is set during the time of the Babylonian exile of the people of Judah (sixth century B.C.E.), it was probably composed around the much later period of the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria.⁶³ In Judaic texts, like those of the much later Christian texts, the prophetic form was developed by social movements who emphasised the evils of the age and the coming of a time of righteousness, often in response to some form of oppression or other. In the period of Antiochus, Jews were persecuted for remaining faithful to Mosaic Law and apocalyptic theology argued that the continual presence of suffering was due to the dominance of evil powers, which it is foretold, are quickly destroyed.⁶⁴

In the prophetic Jewish tradition the prime example of this messianic apocalyptic writing is often thought to be that of the so-called 'Isaiah Apocalypse' (742-687 B.C.). However, the Isaiah text lacks the visionary elements and the angelic mediators of true apocalyptic literature. On the other hand, like the period of Antiochus, the time of Isaiah was one in which Judea was threatened by external forces. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was annexed to the Assyrian Empire⁶⁵ so this was also a dark and threatening period from a Jewish perspective. In one instance it is predicted in Isaiah that "the day of the Lord is near; as destruction from the almighty it will come".⁶⁶ But in the most sustained series of prophetic proclamations he says, "Behold, the Lord will lay waste the earth and make it desolate"..., because, "The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant".

⁶³ Again paraphrasing Reddish, 1995, pp.27-8.

⁶⁴ Daniel, 7-12.

⁶⁵ 2 Kings, 17.

⁶⁶ Isaiah, 13: 5-6.

These unfortunate law breakers, we are told, are cursed and ...”suffer for their guilt”;...⁶⁷ In an anticipation of the language of the New Testament the Old says,

Terror, and the pit, and the snare upon you, O inhabitant of the earth!⁶⁸

It would appear that there can be no escape from the cataclysm, the language and the metaphors of prophetic apocalyptic writing are always those of inevitability and reckoning. The metaphor of the pit is the eternal suffering and the snare is an active entrapment in vice and evil, for, “He who flees at the sound of the terror shall fall into the pit; and he who climbs out of the pit shall be caught in the snare”.⁶⁹ Only then, ...”in Jerusalem, ...he (God) will manifest his glory”. Returning to Daniel for a moment, the *predictive* future-oriented nature of the prophecy, like the “Isaiah apocalypse”, is quite obvious. However, there is surely a major distinction which should be made by those interested in the philosophy of religion between knowledge claims which are based upon past events that have actually occurred, whether metaphorical or historical and however they might be interpreted, and those which are simply based upon the sufferings of the present and wish fulfilment regarding the future.

The template of the kind of horizontal prophetic and apocalyptic utterance which shaped Hegel's analysis of the French Revolution was decidedly *ex eventu*: that ...”heaven transplanted to earth”. Indeed his entire eschatological project looked to the past and present, not to the future. Thus strictly speaking his apocalypticism was highly specific and not at all as ambiguous as the religious literature of the same variety might suggest. The language of prophetic utterance might often be ‘decisionist’ but it is not always *ex eventu*. It might be legitimately normative, as in the parables of Jesus, but it need not always be prophetic. As I shall demonstrate, Hegel made a retrospective avowal on the history of alienation before the coming of Hegel the prophet, in his case the prophecy was always after the fact. In other words, in Hegel's case this amounts to something like a definition of anti-prophecy.

I would like to also suggest then, if only provisionally at this stage, that although Hegel, whether successfully or not, stamped alienation as a ...”blank destiny” and described death as the ..”absolute Lord and Master”, and the *Terror* as

⁶⁷Ibid, 24: 1-24.

⁶⁸Ibid, 24:17.

⁶⁹Ibid, 24: 17-19.

that ..."fury of destruction"..., and finally, and although he characterised the Revolution as a ...'spiritual bath', these ideas were not exclusively apocalyptic forms since the content of such ideas also mirrored the content of such classical *ex eventu* eschatology. In other words, Hegel's accommodation with the political realities of modernity are revealed to be necessary in a manner which is demonstrably obvious to all those who have travelled with him on his spiritual journey.

Given all of this, and if this thesis proves to be convincing to the reader, it is hardly surprising that the initial impact of Hegel's thought was theological rather than political or social. Indeed, Hegel's prophetic imagination, like those of the religious millenialists of the Judeo-Christian tradition, is one from which there can be no simple refutation. This is not to suggest that Hegel adopts this eschatological form subliminally, or unreflectively from a desire to conform to the religious demands of the day, there is every indication that he chose to use this religious template for his own *Phenomenology*. There are at least two very good reasons for this claim; first, while Hegel always holds that philosophy stands above religion and art and was the proper vehicle for grasping the true nature of the eternal, he also holds that in the final analysis, the truths of religion will find their place in the philosophy of the Absolute. Thus he said in his *Encyclopaedia Logic*,

It is no doubt to be remembered that the result of thought harmonises with the import of the Christian religion: for the Christian religion is the revelation of reason.⁷⁰

Secondly, and more importantly, the nature of the Hegel's "Absolute Knowing" is determined by this religious form, for if humanity is to stand with God as the image of God then like God he must be able to survey the beginning, middle and end of time simultaneously, as God must by definition.⁷¹ In short, it would appear that Hegel's "Absolute Knowing" is integral to his entire phenomenological enterprise.

Leaving aside the immediate theological impact of all this for the time being, an impact which was not inconsiderable for the immediate theological events of the period, the consequences for political philosophy properly so-called should be enough to command our attention. On one level, each thinker I consider here is to proclaim with prophetic fervour that their own analysis heralds the dawn

⁷⁰ Hegel. *The Logic*. 1975, p57.

⁷¹ See Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk 5.

of a new era and each demonstrably attended to prophetic power in their own strength of belief. On the other hand, unfortunately the distinguishing feature of the new "shape" testified to was an empty horizon, a vista from which each and every perspective might well be legitimate, by definition. However, as we shall see, from Hegel's point of view, philosophy's time was in the past and present and thus 'object' must actually conform to the concept of the 'subject', a largely cognitive matter. Also, it is worth noting that Hegel's attention to the empirical facts of social and political life indicated that he would have to ultimately seek legitimacy for his *ex eventu* prophecy in the logical consistency of such events. Thus, I shall argue in what follows that Hegel's prophetic apocalypticism is of a very different quality from that of his most ardent admirers and detractors alike.

As we shall also discover, Stirner's bridge to the Egoist's of the future is the *Lumpenproletariat*, in effect these are Nietzsche's "Last Man", when retrospectively understood from our perspective. The Lumpenproletarian is both the bitter final product of thousands of years of anthropological, racial and spiritual development and the model for the new men of the future, the Egoists. To be sure, self-serving in the highest degree but, it is claimed by his admirers, these are the first truly honest men. Then came Marx, who believes that the future belongs, not to the self-serving individual (the particular), but to the new industrial *Proletariat* (the universal) progenitors of the ultimate social union. Marx holds that as an expression of power and inequality, politics between people will cease, giving way to the simple administration of things.⁷² Finally, comes the *Übermensch*, probably the most visionary prophet of these new political agencies. A mythical creature who's own life parodies the life of Christ, and whose teaching is an 'identikit' picture of the parables and testimony of both the Old and New Testaments. The *Übermensch* represents nothing less than a second coming (*Ecce Homo*, even if the *form* is one of self-parody), a "transvaluation of all values" and the dawn of a new era. Each individual has the opportunity to re-make himself without reference to a negative role model of any kind and to draw on their own psycho-sexual energies and capacities to the highest degree. Yet paradoxically, as the epigrams to this section suggest, Hegel, the great theologian of the modern period would appear to have his feet firmly on the ground while his avowedly atheist epigones have their own heads in the spiritual clouds of eschatology.

But to begin this study proper, I would like to review the discourse of 'alienation' and of 'nihilism' since both have had a long history and both have

⁷²This formula may in fact be Engel's but it serves Marx equally well in this particular context.

proved to be elusive and ambiguous and each is the grounding concept of modern eschatology respectively. First, the term alienation.

The history of man's alienation and reconciliation is written by Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Mind*.⁷³

Alastair MacIntyre, 1968.

III

The Discourse of Alienation

The term 'alienation' has not always been used primarily as a philosophical concept. It is worth noting that it has also been used in ordinary everyday language to refer to any growing estrangement which might prevail between former friends, it has been used in economy and law to designate the transfer of property and as a term for relatively general mental deviations from the norm. Most of these senses of the word alienation will not concern us in the present study, rather, the focus here will be the specific philosophical development of the concept. The origins of this philosophical use pre-date all the others and can be found to have a religious origin.⁷⁴ Indeed, as we shall see, Hegel returns again and again to the religious sense of alienation and never really loses his hope that religion can continue to provide a major source of lasting and unifying power, save that of only philosophy itself. For Hegel, religious alienation was never something separate from philosophy but was always integral to it. Thus I would now like to review the religious flavour of alienation.

In the book of *Genesis*, Abraham and Sarah are visited by three 'strangers'.⁷⁵ However, these strangers are not what they seem, they are in fact angels of God and they have come to tell Sarah that she will give birth to a son when they return a year hence. We might like to ask, who is the first-person narrator in this story? Who is this that knows of such plans for a woman of ninety who no longer menstruates? This mystery is possibly the first example of what we might like to call, an 'alienation' in the Western tradition. Within the Pentateuch the general development and discourse of 'idolatry' might also be viewed as a continuation and evolution of this process. In any case, the point is that the 'stranger', whether an

⁷³See Mac Intyre, 1968, p11.

⁷⁴The Heraclitean concern with human ontology and the logos might be thought of as a form of alienation which pre-dates the Judeo-Christian tradition but even if one accepts this then it is something which is only implied, there is no explicit use of the concept in the modern sense.

⁷⁵The Living Torah, Genesis, 18.

idol or angel is the figurative embodiment of all that is mysterious, unknown, incomprehensible, sometimes menacing and almost always revelatory.⁷⁶

In the Pauline writings of the New Testament there is a sense of alienation which would have been very familiar to Hegel. In the *Letter to the Ephesians*, where the central theme is the universal potential of the Christian gospel to unite and bring Gentiles (the particular Gentiles in question being the people of the city of Ephesus, capital of the Roman province of Asia⁷⁷), to a knowledge of God's love. The governing problem throughout is one of alienation.⁷⁸ Paul, addressing the Gentiles from prison, where he was incarcerated by the Jews for advocating the equality of the Gentiles out-with the church said,

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh.... remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Unification (thus peace amongst other rewards such as 'Grace'), under the sign of the cross is the reward for the belief in the divinity of Christ and his messengers, including Paul himself. The word 'remember' denotes the retrospective wisdom of a Self-Consciousness which represents a higher order spirituality, themes which we shall return to again and again in this thesis. The passage continues,

Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hard of heart;⁷⁹...

The notion of separated here, denotes the sense of strangeness which clouds the relationship between these peoples; the Jews and the Christians from each other as well as the Gentile's separation from God. However, the context here is also important; the Pauline assertion is made within the context of the imprisoned. Here one can see something of the multi-layered texture of religious alienation; Gentiles

⁷⁶See the Dictionary of Marxist Thought, 1988, p10.

⁷⁷See Oxford Bible, 1965, map 12 Ephesus is now located in what we call Western Turkey.

⁷⁸Ephesians. 2:12 and 4:17.

⁷⁹Ephesians. 4:17-18.

are certainly alienated from God, thus alienated from believers, but the physical incarceration of Paul himself symbolically represents the alienation of the 'wise' from the 'ignorant'; in this case, the Christian from the Jew (one is also reminded here of the pre-Christian Platonic simile of the 'cave', thus the physical incarceration metaphor is also an epistemological idea). Paul seems to be a very strange and foreign individual whose faith in a false prophet is dangerous enough that he should be separated from the community. Finally, the stoical nature of the letter written by Paul in the face of his own imprisonment represents his own alienation from his captors as well as from the Gentiles. Separation, strangeness, anxiety, retrospective wisdom and danger, these are the eschatological tropes of alienation from a very early period of written history and the root of the philosophical and epistemological use of the term. We shall return to religious eschatology again before we leave this Introduction.

Between the foundational texts of the Judeo-Christian tradition and the nineteenth century, the period covered in the present study, alienation was used by a number of political and social theorists. Hugo Grotius, for example, used the term to denote the transfer of sovereignty from oneself to another and finally, Rousseau could be said to have been describing alienation in his re-working of the 'fall', the decline of natural man and the growth of civilisation.⁸⁰ In his *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, Rousseau is clearly alienated from the false cultivation of sophisticated 'polite society', and in his *Social Contract* he said, "Everything which destroys social unity is worthless: All institutions which put man in contradiction with himself are worthless".⁸¹ Nevertheless, it is the specific Hegelian use of the term to denote a partial understanding, ontological separation and retrospective wisdom which is of particular interest here, and such a use is certainly closer to the original Judeo-Christian tradition and to Rousseau's use of the term than the legal sense employed by theorists such as Grotius.

Richard Schacht has pointed out that Hegel used the term alienation in two subtly different senses, the one negatively and the other positively. In the case of the first example, alienation is often used by Hegel to describe a discordant relation which exists between the individual and the 'social substance' (social institutions) or between one's actual condition and essential nature. In Lukács' erratic but ground breaking study, *The Young Hegel*, the early use of the term 'positivity' is traced:

⁸⁰Paraphrasing from the Dictionary of Marxist Thought, p10.

⁸¹ Rousseau, 1997, p147.

demonstrating that even during his early period Hegel equated religious forms of knowledge with the,

...suspension of the moral autonomy of the subject.⁸²

This is also the sense used by Marx in the famous 1844 *Manuscripts*. However, it is extremely important to note that the suspension of autonomy, is carried by Marx, into the labour process of capitalist production, something which Hegel does not do. Despite his awareness of Adam Smith's work on this subject, nowhere do we find Hegel employing his term for alienation in the same breath as 'work'.

On the other hand, Hegel also uses alienation in a more positive sense, one which is closer to that used by Grotius, to denote the sense of an act of transcendence and preservation or *Aufheben*. In other words, to denote an act of surrender, where one might give up an element of one's particularity in so far as one might obtain and sustain some higher-order good.⁸³ Thus in Hegel's thought the continuation of positive alienation's are necessary spiritual steps which objectify self-reflective being. For example, such positive alienation's make the abstract freedom of the French Revolution 'actual'. As we shall discover, the end of alienation which occurs in Hegel's *Phenomenology* is the end of alienation understood in its negative sense, a point which seems to be almost entirely missed in the thought of Marx.⁸⁴

Although it is clear that it is likely that some controversy will remain as to the precise epistemological status of the concept of alienation, it is also clear that in the case of the above, alienation has some claim to being both psychological, sociological and therefore also empirical. Yet, while it should present social theory with little difficulty in establishing empirically whether one alienates one's property or not, the case of sociological and psychological alienation's are qualitatively very different.

However, the contention that alienation is also a philosophical concept is a third and even more controversial claim. Does the concept of alienation have something coherent to say regarding the nature of knowledge? This question is certainly beyond the scope of the present thesis. Yet, despite such reservations, I will assume throughout an engagement within the phenomenological tradition of

⁸²See Lukács, 1975, pp.18-19.

⁸³See Schacht, 1975.

⁸⁴See Solomon, 1985, for a conventional Marxist reading of the *Phenomenology* which is not simply Kojèvean, pp.453&549.

philosophy, thus I will also assume that alienation has some claim to being a philosophical concept, as Hegel himself holds that it is. Alienation in Hegel's use is always reflexive, thus is always a *self*-alienation and therefore represents not only a veil of ignorance concerning the true nature of the self before the completion of his system, but one should also bear in mind that in phenomenological terms, a lacunae in self-knowledge is also a lacunae in knowing *per se*. In the famous Preface to the *Phenomenology* Hegel himself declares that the logic which lies at the core of his own Phenomenology is speculative philosophy'.⁸⁵ That is, it is a philosophy of self-reflection (Lat.; *speculum*, mirror made of polished metal), in which,

The self-moving concrete shape makes itself into a simple determinateness; in so doing it raises itself to logical form, and exists in its essentiality; its concrete existence is just this movement, and is directly a logical existence.

In the first volume of the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel characterises the 'speculative philosophy' as the pagan freedom of Greek thinking which is in harmony with what 'mind' is, as opposed to the 'dogma' of the medieval schoolmen which is immersed in "...mythology and its fancies".⁸⁶

We know from Hegel's correspondence of 1801 that he reviewed the work of the mathematician Johann Werneberg, who developed a theory of *specularis* in which the infinite attains self-knowledge, in the *Erlangen Literary Review*.⁸⁷ If Phenomenology is to be considered within the canon of philosophy at all, then alienation is certainly a philosophical concept. Again, whether commentators do or do not take the view that alienation is a philosophical concept, Hegel always implied that the phenomenological process was philosophical. In the *Phenomenology*, for example, and within the context of the role of his own form of philosophy in relation to the other sciences, he had this to say,

Let the other sciences try to argue as much as they like without philosophy - without it they can have in them neither life, Spirit, nor truth.⁸⁸

⁸⁵Hegel, 1977, Preface, para 56.

⁸⁶Hegel, 1975, pps. 51-2.

⁸⁷Hegel, 1984, p84.

⁸⁸Hegel, 1977, para 67.

Alienation for Hegel is always a form of mis-understanding, dramatically captured in such phrases as the, ..'way of despair' and the 'Unhappy Consciousness'.⁸⁹ This sense of alienation, used as a intrinsically philosophical concept was also clearly understood by Marx. Indeed, even the necessity of doing philosophy *per se* is considered here to be an expression of alienation. As Marx was to comment in the *German Ideology*,

Philosophy and the study of the actual world have the same relation to another as onanism and sexual love.⁹⁰

The use of the term by Marx in the 1844 *Manuscripts* is well known: according to Marx, humanity is alienated from its own {non} essence, from each other and finally from the products of their own labour. However, as already stated, the alienation of labour is also a departure from the Hegelian understanding.

To be sure, and this is the really important point for what follows, however much Hegel may have thought he had discerned the closure of alienation in the *Phenomenology*, the discourse of alienation did not end with him, the debate continued among his students. A debate, one should add again, which was invariably conducted within an eschatological frame of reference. To name but a few of those who engaged in this form: in his *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* [1835], David Friedrich Strauss attempted to undermine the notion of the divine⁹¹ Jesus by engaging in a close comparative analysis of the scripture. Rather, he asserted that, in all likelihood, the Christian gospels were essentially complex messianic myths developed by alienated Jewish sects under extreme political and social oppression.⁹² This is a startling work of theology which also profoundly impacted on the thought of the young Friedrich Nietzsche. The alienated Christian theologian of modern times was thereafter in a difficult position, compelled to admit this Christological truth before the community itself discovered it, in which case, such a theologian would appear to both himself and the community a hypocrite.⁹³ In his *The Essence of Christianity* of 1841, Ludwig Feuerbach argued that religious belief was nothing other than an alienated form of self-projection, stating,

⁸⁹Ibid, 1977, para 78.

⁹⁰ Marx, 1976, p236.

⁹¹See Strauss, 1994, p773. "Historically, Jesus can have been nothing more than a person, highly distinguished indeed, but subject to the limitations inevitable to all that is mortal:"...

⁹²Ibid, pp. 39-92. Also Stepelevich, 1987, p19.

⁹³Strauss, 1994, p784.

...the historical progress of religion consists in this: that what by an earlier religion was considered as objective, is now recognised as subjective; that is, what was formerly contemplated and worshipped as God is now perceived to be something human.⁹⁴

Max Stirner, in his most important work, *The Ego and Its Own*, 1844, is also concerned with alienation, an example of the pre-egotistical formation of personhood. Stirner's use of the concept of alienation often appears to be more a kind of depth psychology than a philosophical concept. Whether the context is the social position of Jews or of Feuerbach's notion of essence or Bauer's elevation of critique, Stirner's point is always the same: that some separation of the individual within him/herself occurs before the actual realisation of pure Egoism, understood in his sense.⁹⁵ As for Stirner's debate with Marx, we shall return to this in more detail in the course of Chapters III and IV.

The sense of alienation which is of concern in the following thesis is not, therefore, that which we encountered in the beginning of this section, the sense of an ordinary everyday breach, estrangement or break in interpersonal relations. Neither is alienation used in the legal and psychological terms we have just reviewed. Alienation, rather, is either a political concept - the positive sundering of some element of one's personality in order that one should receive some greater benefit [Entäußerung] or, in the second and more important sense, alienation as a philosophical term which denotes a condition of partial understanding or some notion of a perverted human condition [Entfremdung].

⁹⁴See Stepelevich, 1987, p139.

⁹⁵Stirner, 1995, pp. 31-2, 33-4, 68, 74, 81-2, 87, 131.

You probably know that Carrier has been guillotined. Do you still read the French papers? If I remember correctly, someone mentioned to me that they are banned in Württemberg. This trial is very important, and has revealed the complete ignominy of Robespierre's party.⁹⁶

Hegel to Schelling, Bern, Christmas Eve, 1794

IV

The Discourse of Nihilism⁹⁷

The guillotine, key symbol of the French Revolution and an early product of the industrial revolution, not only gave birth to a wholly new practice through the mechanisation of mass killing, it has also loomed large in the philosophy and literature of the post-revolutionary period. In the first case, the case of philosophy, the enlightened attempt to build a humane method of execution which could allow the condemned to meet a dignified end which was consonant with their humanity, this project clearly failed amid indiscriminate carnage and has been viewed as symbolic of the hubris of the Enlightenment which gave it birth.

In literature, for example, Charles Dickens's used the historical backdrop of the Revolution and the guillotine in his *Tale of Two Cities* to warn the English of the excesses of such foreigners and the folly of which they were capable. In one of the most extreme and violent of nineteenth century guillotine novels, *Under the Knife*, by the symbolist and esoteric French writer, Elémir Bourges, the guillotine becomes a

⁹⁶Hegel, 1984, p29. Also see Schmidt, 1998 for an interesting account of this letter and its relationship to the discussion of the Terror in the *Phenomenology*, especially paragraph 590. Schmidt maintains that the reference to the "ignominy" of the Robbespierrites suggests that Hegel took Robbespierre's party to be little better than the autocratic system it sought to replace. Thus the deaths of the Terror were effectively meaningless since little social progress was actually made. Schmidt arrives at this conclusion through an historical reconstruction of the references to the Terror in the *Phenomenology* (590), where the phrase "swallowing a mouthful of water" is taken to be a reference to an article in a popular magazine of the period called *Minerva*, which Hegel may have read. The article concerned was reportage on "Republican Marriages", that is, to the practice of binding couples together (often portrayed as lovers), and then drowning them in the River Seine. Apparently Carrier was the military commander responsible for this practice. However, while I fully accept the facts unearthed by Schmidt's excellent scholarship, I do take issue with his interpretation of the significance of what this practice meant for Hegel. What was "cold and mean" concerning such deaths was not only that they demonstrated the basic failing of the Revolution to bring about a more equitable notion of justice in practice, but that the selection of victims, in common with those on the guillotine, eventually became completely arbitrary. This is the period following Thermidor, after finishing off the Aristocracy and the sons of the Revolution, the Committee for Public Safety arbitrarily murdered young lovers at random. Or at least failed to stop Carrier from so doing.

⁹⁷ Maurice Blanchot for one has denied that nihilism is a meaningful term in his essay on "The Limits of Experience", see Allison, 1988.

potent symbol of nothingness and annihilation.⁹⁸ In Bourges' novel a young Jacobin soldier is forced to take a guillotine around the countryside to use it to repress counter-revolution, the troops refer to it as the "Voracious Lady". Within a short period the young man, wearied by blood-lust, imagines the instrument having a life of its own and in one vision it appears before him, accompanied by thousands of whispering voices who call him towards the blade.

Eventually the young soldier then steals and hides the blade of the guillotine to try and save the life of his pro-Monarchist lover who has been arrested and condemned for offences towards the revolution. However, after disposing of the blade the young soldier is himself discovered and condemned to death, but they can not carry out the execution because they do not know where he has hidden the blade! Eventually the blade is found by a "possessed" idiot who feverishly re-assembles the instrument and proceeds to carry out the executions scheduled for that day, and inevitably, comes the turn of the young soldier. The scene which follows typifies the meaninglessness of all life and death, according to the nihilist account. The soldier advances to the machine and calmly places his head into the recessed oval of the chopping block, no longer resisting "the death for which he is fated". When his lover arrives on the scene too late to save him, she shoots the executioner with a pistol,

Then she climbed the steps one by one, quickly moved across the scaffold, and looked into the bottom of the basket....she knelt down, took the head of her lover in her hands, and piously kissed him on the lips, let out a deep sigh, and without trembling, with a steady hand, blew her brains out.

And now, raising her two triumphant arms bathed in blood, brightly illuminated by the light of the conflagration, the Voracious Lady stood alone on this fatal Esplanade where her servitors had fallen.

Here we are being challenged to think about the meaning of the revolution. Does Liberty, Equality and Fraternity necessarily contain the seeds of its own dissolution? Is the revolution inevitably drawn towards death? Such questions, as we shall discover in Chapters I and II, were fundamental to Hegel and the development of his political theory.

⁹⁸ Here I am paraphrasing from Danial Gerould, 1992, p156.

Contemporary varieties of nihilistic description have taken three main forms and two sub-forms of one of these. These can be described as follows: psychological nihilism; this is nihilism as a phenomenon which is a state of mind, an apathy and listlessness where nothing appears to have value or meaning to the individual. Secondly, there is sociological or anthropological nihilism; a condition in which a lack of social and collective meaning is not simply expressed as a personal malaise but also as an interpretation of a malaise which has been learned from others i.e. here nihilism is understood as a cultural product. Finally, there is philosophical nihilism; this form should be divided into two distinct kinds, theoretical nihilism which, Nietzsche claims, develops from the Socratic truth imperative which ultimately denies and questions the validity of all knowledge. And the second sub-form of philosophical nihilism is ethical nihilism, often the product of some combination of the others, this is where there are seen to be no objective moral standards or values.⁹⁹ It is the cultural and philosophical experiences of nihilism with which I am primarily concerned in this study. However, before I turn to the detailed question of what nihilism is supposed to mean we shall briefly trace the emergence of the term in cultural and political circles.

It should not surprise us to learn that this ordering of nihilism bears a strong family resemblance to Nietzsche's since, as I shall argue, this nihilism was the very product of the *Phenomenology* which Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche are responding to.¹⁰⁰ While Nietzsche explicitly refers to nihilism in his notebooks as "when the highest values devalue themselves", Hegel does not, to my knowledge, ever refer to the concept by name. Yet Hegel is undoubtedly aware of the term nihilism, for it did enter into the common cultural currency of his time.

The oldest known records of its use date from the period of the French Revolution. Dictionaries of the period give definitions such as,

...one who is politically impartial to good for nothing.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹In this categorisation I follow Goudsblom, 1980, however, there are any number of other ways of defining the various forms of nihilism. For example, in D.A. Crosby's account he divides the concept into political, moral, epistemological, cosmic and existential, see Crosby, 1988, p8. Crosby seems to have been unaware of Goudsblom, 1980, however. There is considerable overlap in these two works, for example there is virtually no difference between what Goudsblom describes as "psychological nihilism" and Crosby's "existential nihilism".

¹⁰⁰See Taylor, 1979, p167, also, Otto Pöggeler, 1970.

¹⁰¹See Goudsblom, 1980, p3.

There is also an entry in the *Néologie ou Vocabulaire des Mots Nouveaux II*, where Louis-Sebastian Mercier defines a nihilist in the following manner,

Nihilist or nothingist, one who does not believe in anything. A fine product of the evil philosophy that flaunts itself in the fat *Dictionnaire Encyclopedique*. What does it want to make of us? Nihilists!¹⁰²

The term was also used with negative connotations in Germany, often as a popular description of the young. We might also suppose that Hegel was exposed to the concept, since in 1799 Heinrich Jacobi described Fichte's work as inevitably, and in the final analysis,

...an idealism which deserves no better name than nihilism,¹⁰³

There is also some textual evidence to suggest that the term nihilism was in fairly widespread use in Germany even before such commentaries on Fichte's work. The term was used in a book by J.H. Obereit in 1787, by F. Jenisch in 1796 and more importantly, by F. Schlegel in 1797.¹⁰⁴ Two important facts emerge from all of this: first of all, the term nihilism emerged from the period of the French Revolution and secondly, it carried with it largely negative connotations. This position remained much the same throughout the first half of the nineteenth century and certainly held during the period in which Hegel wrote the *Phenomenology*. Along with writers such as Franz Von Baader; who also argued that nihilism was a malign by-product of the Enlightenment,¹⁰⁵ From the period of the *Phenomenology* it is clear that Hegel was troubled by the legacy of the Enlightenment, referring to its highest product as "Utility". Thus within the context of a re-organisation of the Bavarian Academy of the Sciences, along what he believed to be pedestrian empiricist lines, Hegel wrote to Niethammer on August 8, 1807,

Experience has proven it - experience, the empirical! You know!
And proven what? That potatoes, horseradish, teapots, energy-saving ovens, etc, all prospered well where the sciences flourished.
You know! So let us promote science!¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²Cited in Goudsblom, Paris, 1801, p143,

¹⁰³Also cited in Goudsblom. 1799 Werke III, Leipzig, 1816, p44, also see Jacobi an Fichte.

¹⁰⁴Ibid, 1980, p4.

¹⁰⁵Ibid, 1980, p4. Über die Intelligenz, 1826, Sämtliche Werke. 1. pp. 133-50. Also cited in Goudsblom.

¹⁰⁶Hegel, 1984, p136.

Hegel, like Dostoevsky, proved to be a stern critic of Utilitarianism, pointing ultimately, to the moral bankruptcy of such a system of thought. In both cases, it should be noted, they argue that this moral impotency results in the legitimisation of murder. Hegel for his part, despite the fashion for post-modern critique, was well acquainted with the 'other' of reason.¹⁰⁷ In Russia, nihilism met Hegelianism in the popular work of a literary icon, Turgenev, who himself travelled to Berlin in the 1840,s to soak up Hegelianism at its source.

In *Fathers and Sons*, (1862) and here the pejorative overtones are somewhat mitigated, Arkady, introducing the philosophical principles of his friend and the anti-hero of the book, Bazarov, to his Uncle, said,

A nihilist is someone who bows to no authority, who accepts no principle at face value, no matter in how much respect that principle may be held.¹⁰⁸

Exasperated, Uncle Pavel Petrovich can only reply,

Yes. It used to be Hegelians, and now there are nihilists. We shall see how you manage to exist in a void, in an airless vacuum.¹⁰⁹

As we shall see, in Chapters I and II of the present work the mention of Hegelians and nihilists in the same breath is certainly no accident of intellectual history.

In any case, as Russian appearances of the term nihilism increase the popular image of the nihilist begins to take shape in the imagination of the time; in Dostoevsky's book *The Idiot*, Prince Myshkin is visited by a group of jaded, shabby, bohemian and provocative nihilists. By turns the character of the nihilist is enduringly shaped by Russian popular literature into a dedicated lover of truth, an uncompromising zealot, and as a ragamuffin bohemian. This image of the nihilist was obviously less malign than the real political movement of the Russian nihilists who advocated terror and political assassination, an interesting paradox in its own right. In any case, we shall see in Chapter II, that this literary characterisation of 'the typical nihilist' was well known to Hegel over eighty years before through a text which anticipated the later Russian model, a text which was virtually a *samizdat* of the period, Diderot's unpublished book *Rameau's Nephew*. This book fell into Hegel's

¹⁰⁷ See Berthold-Bond, 1995, this included a relatively coherent theory of madness.

¹⁰⁸ Goudsblom, 1980, p7.

¹⁰⁹ Turgenev, 1972, p94.

hands before he wrote the *Phenomenology*. And in Chapter III we will consider the actual incarnation of such characters in the *dramatis personae* of Max Stirner's *Lumpenproletariat*.

Most English language dictionaries suggest that nihilism, [Lat. *nihil*, nothing], is a doctrine in which all values are worthless and that nothing is knowable or can be communicated. Or similarly it can mean a willingness to reject all norms of morality. In his survey of modern nihilism, *Nihilism and Culture*, Johan Goudsblom argues that,

...nihilism is not something uniquely modern which has appeared out of the blue...in the course of the last two centuries...neither is it a timeless feature of existence or implicit in human nature,...¹¹⁰

Yet, in contrasting opinion Stanley Rosen has argued that the,

Danger of nihilism is a permanent human possibility...the pervasive presence of nihilism today is due to a specific series of philosophical decisions of the past.¹¹¹

Clearly the substantive meaning of nihilism and its effect is still a matter of dispute. As in the case of alienation, there is also some doubt as to the philosophical coherence and value of such a broad and amorphous term.

In any case, it is not my intention in what follows to claim that Hegel was a nihilist. Clearly, such an assertion makes little sense given Hegel's determined effort to reconcile Self-Consciousness with modernity. Rather, I will demonstrate that Hegel's own response to the 'modern' crisis, though problematic (given his acquiescence before the subjugation of women), did produce a coherent compendium of political theory. In other words, Hegel's answer to modern nihilism is realistic, pragmatic and possibly even more productive than those of the other theorists considered. In short, current fashionable theories of the 'End of History' aside, Hegel's liberalism remains the most enduring and comprehensive system, as political theory.

¹¹⁰Ibid, 1972, p xii.

¹¹¹Ibid, 1972, p xiv.

It has not always been clear that Hegel, or Hegelianism, is not nihilistic, or at least that Hegelianism did not always inevitably lead to some kind of nihilism. Gilles Deleuze, for example, has suggested that,

History in general and Hegelianism in particular found their outcome, but also their most complete dissolution, in a triumphant nihilism.¹¹²

In fact, with the possible exception of Stirner, none of the thinkers considered in this thesis should be thought of as a programmatic nihilist, although even in Stirner's case it is doubtful that he would have approved of the nihilist's apparent commitment to truth. Rather, each in his own post-Hegelian way, was responding to a nihilism which they regarded as a theological *fait accompli*. In other words, as Habermas has characterised it, "modernity is a single theme with ever new titles", and the titles are 'lack of meaning', 'ethical relativism', 'disenchantment', 'crisis of agency' and so on. This is the very stuff of *modernity*.

Nihilism, understood philosophically and politically, has often come to denote those who seek to actively undermine all knowledge or human belief systems for its own sake. However, according to Stirner, there was meaning and this meaning resided in the ultimate sovereignty of the individual Egoist. In the case of Marx, meaning ultimately lay in a rich concept of individuality to come and in a harmonious community of such agents, able in turn, to satisfy all the most basic needs of that same community. In the case of Nietzsche, a new sensual aesthetics of life prefigured the kind of excellence that truly made the act of living worthwhile and which engendered personal authenticity. None of these thinkers should be thought of as true nihilists then, though each was perhaps haunted by the appearance of nihilism, a nihilism each perceived in the historical direction of the human spirit itself. In the case of Stirner and Marx, they both largely accepted Hegel's dialectical exposition of this history, albeit critically. In the view of Nietzsche, Hegel was simply the apex of the nihilist process itself, the perfect embodiment of the kind of spiritual *sansculotism* which is decadent modernity.

Finally, modern nihilism, when used in the present work denotes a new set of human problems and questions and it suggests that these were immanent in the actual spiritual adventures of the French Revolution, as interpreted by Hegel. In this spiritual revolution epistemological conventions, moral norms and ethical values

¹¹² Deleuze, 1992, p161.

break away from traditional sources of philosophical and religious knowledge, while paradoxically doing so within a framework which retained the same form as these original sources.

I would now like to turn towards the religious and philosophical notion of alienated time and its reconciliation properly speaking. That is, to the unfolding religious symmetry of Hegel's theory of alienation and his own version of the *ex eventu* prophecy.

...reconciliation has three *real* stages: the stage of immediacy [or of the heart], which is more an abstraction than it is reconciliation; the stage in which the church is dominant, a church that is outside itself; and the stage of ethical life.

Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, 1827¹¹³

This World [Spirit] looks on as something alien, a world, therefore, of which it must now take possession.

Hegel, 1806

CHAPTER I

The End of Alienation

Despite the interest in Hegel's early work over the last fifty years the view that he was a metaphysical philosopher in the 'subjective idealist' tradition still persists.¹¹⁴ This view of Hegel as an essentially anti-materialist philosopher who believed that everything that exists is in some sense mental, has only served to obscure his double sense of the terms *Entfremdung* and *Entäußerung*.¹¹⁵ *Entfremdung*, according to Hegel, refers to a sense of estrangement that may obtain within the person or between people and their culture [*Bildung*], and *Entäußerung* means self-objectification or externalisation.¹¹⁶ In Hegel's thought these two terms are handled in a subtly discrete manner. According to Hegel's usage, the term self-estrangement is largely a negative phenomena although sometimes a necessary one, while self-objectification is a positive manifestation of one's concrete personality.

However, Hegel's critics have long since held, and Marx above all, that Hegel indulges in a German passion for transcendent metaphysics and that he

¹¹³ Hegel, 1988, p484.

¹¹⁴ Of course, Hegel was an idealist in so far as that in common with all idealist doctrine, he held that there is no access to reality apart from that which the mind provides. However, unlike Berkeley, he did not hold that all reality was therefore confined to the mind. See Hegel's critique of Schelling's absolute idealism, Oxford, 1977, paragraphs 15, 16, and in a different context but equally important, 489-491. Hegel described his position as one of "Absolute Idealism", he said, "For the true statement of the case is rather as follows. The things of which we have direct consciousness are mere phenomena, not for us only, but in their own nature; and the true and proper case of these things, finite as they are, is to have their existence founded not in themselves but in the universal divine idea". And says Hegel, unlike Kant's "subjective idealism" this should be termed "absolute idealism", *The Logic*, 1975, p73.

¹¹⁵ This notion of Hegel the idealist metaphysician is also adopted by Micheal Inwood, 1983, p1.

¹¹⁶ Another classic example of this confusion can be found in Darby, 1990, p75.

attempts to describe obscure metaphysical entities not encountered in any possible realm of experience.¹¹⁷ For example, in his introduction to the early Hegelian writings on alienation by the young Karl Marx, Lucio Colletti celebrates the fact that Marx was able to give concrete substance to Hegel's ...“purely abstract” treatment of the same concept.¹¹⁸ However, as Warminski¹¹⁹ argues, this account of Hegel the ‘subjective idealist’ is clearly rejected in the dialectic of desire (The Truth of Self-Certainty¹²⁰) which requires a sensuous and perceived world, we shall certainly see that this is the case in what follows.

According to Hegel, “Absolute Knowing” is the properly philosophical point of view and as such is coeval with “Absolute Freedom” of mind, thus he considered that the relationship of philosophy to its own thought products as fundamental to his whole account. In other words, in some sense the Hegelian ‘absolute’ has claims to being the proper method for establishing the truth, as well as the system of truth and certainly in a manner which precludes any ontological and epistemological lacunae of the kind which are suggested in the concept of *Entfremdung*. Thus he was to say in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*,

...philosophical knowledge is the richest in material and organisation, and therefore, as it came before us in the shape of the result, it presupposed the existence of the concrete formations of

¹¹⁷Paraphrasing F.C Beiser, see his effective defence of Hegel's conception of the unity of the “Absolute” and historicism, in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, p288.

¹¹⁸See the *Early Writings*, Penguin 1975, p279. That the *Phenomenology* is concerned with alienation is seldom doubted within current scholarship. One of the most recent and important Hegel commentators considers that the *Phenomenology* is actually a work of existentialism and as such it is not a work of philosophy at all, i.e. not epistemological, [Harris, pxxxi]. Harris contends that the *Phenomenology* breaks with the Enlightenment tradition altogether and is actually a restatement of the Romantic position [pxviii], rather, it is a political and ethical text. However, this idea of Hegel the Romantic thinker serves to deliver an ephemeral quality to his thought which underestimates the distance he himself sought to put between his own thought and that of the Romantics. For example, in the Preface of the *Phenomenology* Hegel railed against the concept of creative Genius. The idea of Genius was symptomatic of that movement, where dark volcanic passions and bright ideas [Preface, paras 68 & 69] constituted an eternally crooked and flawed species for whom progress could never be expected to yield lasting improvements either with regard to their material or spiritual condition. Nothing was to be gained, Hegel explained, from the “.conceit of Genius” with its ..“profound original ideas” and ..“sky-rockets of inspiration”, but rather in the ..“truth ripened to its properly matured form” so as to be capable of being the property of all self-conscious Reason. Of course, in the *Phenomenology* Hegel does hope to restore man to the centre of things and is ultimately concerned with spirituality but in so broad a manner and his method of doing this is so untypical of the Romantic movement that the meaning of that movement would be severely compromised if Hegel's work were to be included in that cannon. Again, see Solomon, px&p5 for a rejection of Hegel as part of the Romantic movement, also pp.575&638. Also Darby, 1990, p74.

¹¹⁹Warminski, in Barnett, 1998, p179.

¹²⁰Hegel, 1977, para 167.

consciousness, such *as individual and social morality, art and religion*,¹²¹
[my emphasis].

In other words, "the concrete formations of consciousness", i.e. objects in the world, are not mere epiphenomena of human "life" but the "self-actualised" material which prove the veracity of the Absolute in the first place. This is Hegel's conception of the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic* as the "circle of circles".¹²² If one wants to get at the truth of what one is, according to Hegel, then one must fully understand these "actualised" products, such as art and religion, which are uniquely ours. Thus "self-alienation's" are the most basic concepts of the whole system, they are, in a sense, the building blocks of the system in "becoming".

Marx's characterisation of Hegel's concept of alienation has suggested that Hegel only deals with subjectivity as but a form of philosophical contemplation. Thus Marx alleges, as did all the Young Hegelians, that Hegel could only ever achieve reconciliation and harmony within the mystical world of spirit or *Geist* and not within actual society. Yet much of Hegel's discourse on alienation takes as its material that which he described as the realm of "actuality" (*Wirklichkeit*). While this need not imply 'matter' in the modern materialist sense in which this word is often used, it need not exclude such an idea either.

In what follows I will hold to a conventional reading of Hegel's project as reconciliatory, thus it should become apparent that Hegel's purpose during discussions on ways of thinking which were typified in the examples of the "struggle of thought against itself", or during the "ethical life" of classical Greece, to name but two, shall demonstrate that Hegel did indeed take the 'real' world seriously. Thus the closure of alienation did not just involve a contemplative notion of reconciliation but a reconciliation of subjective and objective worlds. One, to be sure, that he equated with the sacrifice of Jesus in his religious thought and thus already long established, but he sought a way of looking at this reconciliation that was not out of step with the realities of modernity and its disenchantment's.¹²³

¹²¹ Hegel, *The Logic*, 1975, p46.

¹²² There is a schematic diagram of what the "circle of circles" might look like in Sarlemijn, 1975, p7. This was apparently drawn by the "Old Hegelian", Haring but was rejected by Michelet's Hegel Prize committee of the Berlin Philosophical Society. Probably because the boundaries between certain aspects of Hegel's philosophy were deemed inappropriate.

¹²³ See Hegel, in Bubner, 1997, p338, "It [human cognition] should enable us to comprehend all the ills of the world, including the existence of evil, so that the thinking spirit may be reconciled with the negative aspects of existence; and it is in world history that we encounter the sum total of concrete evil. (Indeed, there is no department of knowledge in which such a reconciliation is more urgently required than in world history"....). However, I am also aware that this reconciliation between man and his

Hegel's sense of closure in "Absolute Knowing" posits not only the end of alienation but that he also marked the turning point towards the problem of nihilism. The second chapter, therefore, will take nihilism as the point of departure, whereas this chapter is based upon the triadic structure of Hegel's conception of the Holy Trinity which is the religious representation of the "Absolute Idea" in his system. I will argue that it logically follows that states of non-alienation are based upon conceptual naiveté's, as opposed to the conception of the "self-thinking idea" of the *Philosophy of Mind*, or similarly, of the "Absolute Idea" of the *Logic*.¹²⁴ Thus I will argue for a recapitulation of Hegel's religious thought in his philosophical thought, a conception which holds that God is the Father *in-and-for-himself*, that the dialectic, the struggle between appearance and reality is the Son understood as the creation, the fall and the final reconciliation in the life of Jesus. Finally, there is the Holy Spirit of the community, its alienation and worldly realisation as spirit.¹²⁵

This chapter is sub-divided into three sections which follow this religious understanding: in the first section I will attempt to demonstrate that some kind of closure to alienation logically flows from Hegel's notion of the "Son",¹²⁶ in other words, his reading of the significance of Christ is in keeping with his dialectical method. In section two we will move on to consider, contrary to Marx's accusation that Hegel was a kind of mystic, Hegel's deep interest in "actuality". An actuality which is central to his account of alienation and its transcendence which is the journey of the community, the "Holy Ghost". Finally, in section three we will

modernity is precisely what is taken to be conservative by left Hegelians, since modernity itself is taken to be alienating in practice, according to their account, See J.M. Bernstein in Pelczynski, 1984, p14.

¹²⁴ See Hegel, 1990, pps. 312-14, Hegel remarks that in opposition to "shallow pantheism", his conception of the "esoteric study of God and identity, as of cognition's, and notions, is philosophy itself". It is the "truth aware of itself, the logical system" as a "spiritual principle", it is the "self-thinking idea". The "Absolute Idea" says Hegel, is the "sole subject matter and content of philosophy", in other words, and again paraphrasing Hegel, the highest mode of philosophy is also the highest mode of the absolute idea so the former is best placed to comprehend the latter, *The Logic*, 1996, p824.

¹²⁵ This outline of the triadic structure of Christianity is a constant in Hegel's thought, from the period of the early theological writings to the mature and more detailed lectures on religion of 1827. In the latter this structure is described under the heading, "The Consummate Religion", Hegel, 1988, p389.

¹²⁶ Hegel's dialectic has arguably been the subject of more obscurantist secondary literature than any other concept in the history of Western philosophy. A classic example is a number of confusing interpretations concerning the so-called master-slave relation, see Solomon, 1985. According to Solomon the dialectic is not social but pre-social, p427. While in the example of Lordship and Bondage there is certainly an attempt to explain the pre-historical birth of consciousness, no where does Hegel rule out the idea that this is also social. Solomon confuses the origin of the social with the notion of history. In any case, all one can do in a work such as this is to state clearly the favoured reading employed. the approach of the present author is summed up in this passage, again by Beiser, "The dialectic consists in the conflict between the end of man and his actual political condition, and the attempt by man to change these conditions so that they are more in accord with his nature. Since man is not from the beginning fully or clearly aware of his goal, and since he does not know the necessary conditions to realise it, the process of achieving his end will be a journey of self-discovery", p290.

consider another reason to believe that it was Hegel's intention to find closure, in his account of the 'privileged standpoint', there is contained a self-knowing Being which is represented in religious thought by God the "Father". While I acknowledge that Hegel's religious thought is often regarded lightly by scholars, especially of the analytic variety, who seek to locate Hegel firmly within the mainstream of the Western philosophical tradition, it is not my intention to defend the notion of a 'theological' Hegel. Rather, I will only cover this ground in-so-far as it enables me to focus on the centrality of alienation in Hegel's religious and philosophical thought.

This is its (Philosophy) unique purpose, deed and goal: to arrive at the Concept of the concept and so to arrive at its return {into itself} and contentment.¹²⁷

...the standpoint of separation, which belongs to the concept of spirit, is not one that man should remain at either...¹²⁸

Hegel, *The Logic*

I

Alienation and Reconciliation

Hegel tells us in the *Phenomenology* that ..“absolute freedom” is a concept which transforms both the inner world of consciousness and the real world,¹²⁹ but what is the meaning of freedom here? On the one hand, there seems to be little doubt among most Hegel scholars that Hegel favoured some form of positive liberty.¹³⁰ In his Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* for example, Allen Wood maintains that freedom is the ..“human good [which] is identified with the self-actualisation of the human spirit”,¹³¹ Also, it is clear in the later *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* that this self-actualisation is clearly identified with the modern state.¹³²

In the *Philosophy of Right* it appears that Hegel rejects the common sense notion of freedom as the ...“possibilities of action” which one might enjoy. Rather, freedom itself in his view was a particular *form* of action and rather than a ...“venting of ones particularity and ..idiosyncrasy”, it was some act felt by rational Beings where these same choices realised were self-identifiable with particular social institutions.¹³³ While the same theme is present in the earlier *Phenomenology*, where it is also clear that particularity for example, as in the case of the mode of thinking he calls “Utility”, is identified with the ..“universal work” of the entire

¹²⁷ Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, 1991, p41.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 1991, p63.

¹²⁹ Hegel, 1977, para 582. Reclam, p 413. PhG.

¹³⁰ See Berlin's, *Four Essays on Liberty*, for a classic restatement of positive liberty.

¹³¹ See Wood, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, CUP, 1991, pxi.

¹³² Ibid, pp.149& 290-1. Introduction, “Freedom is nothing more than a knowledge and affirmation of such universal and substantial objects as law and justice, and the production of a reality which corresponds to them-i.e. the state.” p134. Felix Meiner, Hamburg, 1955, pp. 145& 220. This support of the state should not, of course, be considered an exoneration of totalitarianism, see Avineri, 1972, pp.176-93.

¹³³ Ibid, 1991, p20, here I have in mind Hegel's famous phrase where he says that the “rational is the actual and the actual is the rational”.

community: in the *Phenomenology* it is even more self-evident that these social institutions are as potentially elastic and self-regulatory as the lives of particular individuals.

Unlike the *Philosophy of Right*, in the *Phenomenology* "Absolute Freedom" is first revealed during the revolt on the streets of Paris. During that revolt each individual actually transcended the social and technical division of labour in society and every individual knew that every other individual, in their turn, also knew this to be both a possibility and an actuality. In other words, according to Hegel, it became an actual reality of life.¹³⁴ Unlike in the participatory, institutional and democratic Rousseauesque schema, sovereignty really did shift from the King to the people.¹³⁵ Hegel identified the rioting and mass social unrest as a process in which people ate, slept, produced food, weapons and pamphlets, in short, as a form of life in which human proclivities and idiosyncrasies were in harmony with the Self-Consciousness which produced them, this is the Self-Consciousness of complete freedom as social fluidity.¹³⁶ This conception of sovereignty contained the possibility of a new and radical conception of personal autonomy, and therefore, would require new kinds of institutions which would correspond to the depth of this new subjectivity, not only in civil society but in public life as well. In short, it suggested a new "configuration" or arrangement of history and time.¹³⁷

Remaining with Hegel's reflections on the French Revolution for a moment, as I have already indicated, there we see challenged the idea that institutions, by definition, must embody both a technical and a social division of labour. Before the Revolution people living with such institutions would therefore depend for their subsistence upon some particular technical and social role. An individual cobbler would be unlikely to actualise some other existence if dependent upon the technical category of shoe mender for a living. However, the social fluidity of the

¹³⁴Hegel, 1977, para 584-5, Reclam Edition, pp. 14-15. In what follows I will use the term mutual-recognition interchangeably with that of social-recognition. Mutual-recognition is the acknowledgement by each of the rights of each to be completely autonomous in all matters. In other words, there are no objective moral limits beyond which a person might not go. While the community as a whole might appear to be the only barrier to this form of positive liberty it is not. What may be true for the rights and the autonomy of the individual is also true for the community as a whole so effectively, this is no barrier at all. In short, any action is justifiable in and by such a community as community, see Gunn, 1987. Also Beiser, pp. 292-3. The repercussions of this are quite different from that of Kant's notion of adult autonomy as but a form of rational self-government.

¹³⁵Hegel, 1977, para 584-5, where he says, "The undivided substance of absolute freedom ascends the throne of the world without any power being able to resist it".

¹³⁶Ibid, 1977, para 594. Reclam. p421, the fear of social and political anarchy animates much of this discussion.

¹³⁷ Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, 1991, pps. 352 and 376.

Revolution demonstrated the realisable and arbitrary ability of individuals to lift themselves from any given task, position or social status and relocate themselves elsewhere. On the other hand, this conception of freedom as arbitrariness does not sit comfortably with the realisation of freedom in the self-identity of the individual with the ethical state which is the dominant theme of the later *Philosophy of Right*. It is clear, rather, that in the *Phenomenology* "Absolute Freedom" does not coincide with the identification by individuals with any institution, such as those of shoe mender, but with the total destruction of those same institutions.¹³⁸ In short, "Absolute Freedom" can only produce an anarchy in which the community is unmediated by any institutions but which is, never-the-less, able to re-produce itself.¹³⁹ In Hegel's political philosophy such freedoms are abstract and immature by definition.

We also find in the immediate post-revolutionary phase, that the re-imposition of institutional structures brings a new period of self-slavery. In the ebb tide of the revolution political "factions" are able to resume power and the ... "legislative, judicial and executive powers" begin to re-assert themselves, but not as actualised universals since "factions" always remain particular by definition. This is the developing account of abstract freedom given by Hegel during his section on the revolutionary "Terror", he makes it quite clear that with the re-composition of these powers real freedom once again becomes a casualty because ... "representation" is not ... "actual", a freedom ... "by proxy", says Hegel, is no freedom at all. The Revolution was a cataclysmic spiritual advance, according to Hegel, so we find that in his critique of the terror, Hegel subscribes to the view that ... "Absolute Freedom" amounts to nothing less than the self-awareness by all of the possibilities of action by all.¹⁴⁰ However, as we have seen, this is an understanding of freedom Hegel also considered to be quite immature. "Absolute Freedom" then, is whole and true, but the kernel of truth it contained must mature, as it does in the later sections of the *Phenomenology* and in the *Philosophy of Right*.

¹³⁸Ibid, 1977, para 589, Reclam, p417. It is also worth noting that it was certainly this aspect of Hegel's thought which appealed to many of the most famous anarchists of the nineteenth century, for example: Stirner and Bakunin were both deeply influenced by the *Phenomenology*. See Solomon, 1985, pp.582-4.

¹³⁹In reality probably quite badly, goodness knows what kind of bread the cobbler might produce while exercising his absolute freedom to be the baker?

¹⁴⁰This notion of a decisive break in Hegel's thought after the *Phenomenology* is not new, see Solomon, 1985, p4&14.

For Hegel, human beings are completely self-determining by definition, this is their true nature.¹⁴¹ Hegel takes the view that in the beginning all beings are ...“being-for-self or pure negativity”. He says,

The result is the same as the beginning, only because the beginning is the purpose.... and that the ..realised purpose, or the existent actuality, is movement and unfolded becoming,...unrest that is the self....

Later in the *Phenomenology* he describes the *modus operandi* of human consciousness as the ...“absolute unrest of pure self-movement”,.. or ...“the absolute negativity of everything determinate”.¹⁴² In Hegel's account this account of consciousness is the fundamental basis of what constitutes being human in the first instance, it is the journey of the ...“way of the soul” out of the ...“natural consciousness”.¹⁴³ The “natural attitude”, the complete antithesis of “Absolute Knowing”, represents the complete immersion of man in natural life. According to Hegel, man submerged in nature is pre-alienated man, thus pre-philosophical man, but he is still man and not animal.

In the *Encyclopaedia Logic* Hegel demonstrates this understanding very clearly in his discussion of the Mosaic legend of the “fall”.¹⁴⁴ To be a “natural” being is to “wear the garb of innocence” says Hegel and as such one is merely animal in-so-far as one is incapable of doing evil, for “there is no evil in nature”. However, to be human means to be evil i.e. to be capable of subjectivity. This Hegel calls “severed life”, that is, it is an alienation. The purpose of thought is to work through this alienation and return to a higher form of “concord”, one must be capable of reaching the universal and the objective.

Hegel continues, Adam is forbidden to eat of the “tree of knowledge”, (of the tree of life nothing more is said for the time being) but the “serpent, the likeness of God in the knowledge of good and evil” tempts Adam to do just that. Adam's first sense of shame in his own nakedness once he eats of the fruit represents the birth of human consciousness. Hegel goes on to say that for his

¹⁴¹In the third volume of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* [EG], he said, “For this reason the essential, but formally essential, feature of mind is Liberty: i.e. it is the notion's absolute negativity or self-identity”, para 382. And from the student notes or *Zusätze* we learn, “The substance of the mind is freedom, i.e. the absence of dependence on an other”, Oxford, 1990, p15.

¹⁴²Hegel, 1977, para 163, Reclam, p129, also para 588, Reclam, pp.416-7 & para 22, Reclam, p23.

¹⁴³Ibid, 1977, para 78, 163, 646 & 659, Reclam, p414-15.

¹⁴⁴Hegel. *The Logic*, 1975, p42.

transgression man must work in the sweat of his brow, this curse, far from being an eternal damnation, is viewed by Hegel as something positive, for,

....if it [work] is the result of the disunion, it is also the victory over it.

One should not read this too literally, "work", in this case refers to all such products of specifically "human" activity, as he said, it is "individual and social morality, art and religion", not as in the case of Marxian alienation, only the modern labour process. According to Hegel then, if the tree of life represents the finitude of the body then the tree of knowledge represents the infinitude of *Geist*, that which is necessary and eternal, the journey of thought and the infinitude of philosophy itself. "Work" is the means of transcendence for,

....in these outside things man is dealing with himself.

Thus, philosophy is not something which is ultimately forbidden, the tree of knowledge is a gift of God whereas the tree of life is denied man in the expulsion from Eden. As Hegel says,

The hand that inflicts the wound is the hand that heals it.

and finally the lesson here, according to Hegel, is that,

Philosophy is knowledge, and it is through knowledge that man first realises his original vocation, to be the image of God.

In other words, the reconciliation of alienation is symbolically represented in the life of Christ, the Son of God and symbolic image of the Father. Freedom means that humanity has a choice, either to find, build and identify with those aspects of life which are in harmony with freedom itself or to remain alienated and spiritually dysfunctional.

Returning for a moment to the theme of religious representation, it would hardly make sense to say that God is himself alienated. The unity of man and God we must surely suppose, is both a choice and the end of alienation which is implied

in the act of choosing *per se*.¹⁴⁵ In any case, the more important point is that in the pre-philosophical 'natural attitude'¹⁴⁶ man is immersed in nature and not disposed to know alienation, but in the shame of his nakedness he becomes aware of 'others' and his separation from them. In short, he becomes alienated, and alienation amounts to nothing less than the gift of philosophy itself which must eventually find resolution.

In Hegel's account the distinction between man and animal is interesting. Animals just are what they are, they have a strictly limited programmatic set of behaviours, while human beings are what they are not, our behavioural repertoire and the myriad ... "impulses and inclinations", which drive such a repertoire are finite, while the "Absolute Idea" is infinite and eternal. In his "Introduction" to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* he said,

It is customary to present history as beginning with a state of nature or state of innocence. But according to our present conception of the spirit, its initial condition is not a state of freedom at all but a state in which the spirit as such has no reality.¹⁴⁷

In other words, according to Hegel, nature is contingent but *Geist* is a necessary movement. This idea also provides the basis of Hegel's dilemma concerning beginnings. The problem of the "natural consciousness" is this; how is philosophy possible given the beginning of man and the natural consciousness? Or to put the problem in more philosophical terms, how can something eternal emerge from something contingent? However, Hegel did not consider that man was once a natural being existing in a state of nature in the first instance, again returning to *The Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, he said,

This notion of a perfect primeval condition does, however, contain a philosophical element- namely the realisation that man cannot have originally existed in a state of animal insensibility. This is perfectly correct; man cannot have developed from a state of animal insensibility, although he may have from a state of human insensibility.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ See the New Testament, Matthew, 26: 36. The story of the events at Gethsemane suggest that Jesus chose his calling.

¹⁴⁶ See Hegel, the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol III, pp.369-79, University of Nebraska Press, 1995 [VGP]. See Solomon, 1985, pp.302-3.

¹⁴⁷ Hegel, 1987, p98.

¹⁴⁸ Hegel, 1987, p133.

In short, the 'natural attitude' is not a natural state in the animal sense at all. This further enriches our grasp of the Genesis account of beginnings which we saw earlier.¹⁴⁹ The movement from "immediate state" to the spiritual life is one of *Aufheben*.¹⁵⁰ The 'natural' animal element of man is preserved as organism, to be sure, but in the movement of thinking *per se*, which is man's essence, he becomes sensible man, something qualitatively different from animal. Thus man is both man and animal but he is also neither, he is "Man" in Hegel's special spiritual sense of the "self-thinking idea". Where philosophy strives to fill in the gaps here, religion succeeds in its allegorical account, which is why Hegel said that religion can exist without philosophy but philosophy cannot exist without religion.¹⁵¹ The ultimate solution to this problem of beginnings in Hegel is beyond the scope of the present thesis¹⁵² and is certainly not crucial to the main thrust of my argument but Robert Pippin has supplied a much condensed version of what such beginnings might look like in logical terms.

Hegel calls the process which leads from the standpoint of the "natural consciousness" to comprehensive "Absolute Knowing", "determinate negation".¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹See Darby, 1990, chapter one, this problem was probably prompted by Rousseau, who was all the rage in Hegel's youth. Also, while Flay, 1984, is correct to insist that the *Phenomenology* is essentially a philosophical work, in so far as Hegel engages with many of the epistemological concerns of other Western philosophers: Hegel certainly seeks grounds for warranted access to truth claims and hopes to acquire knowledge of the ultimate nature of reality. However, Flay goes too far when he insists that such a reading automatically invalidates readings of the Kojèvean stamp, see Flay, pp.53-4 also p3 and the notes on pp.270-71, [again see Beiser, 1993]. Flay misses the larger point in his analysis: that the pre-phenomenological obfuscation of knowledge, i.e. before "Absolute knowing" is, according to the Marx-Kojève account is the clearest example of alienation itself. This point is even implicitly admitted by Flay where he uses the term "tension" when discussing the dialectic. He says, "What was introduced as a result of the first complete dialectical movement was a tension between experience as given in the natural attitude and the imputed warranty for that experience which was to lie in the pre-suppositions elicited from the natural attitude", p41. Even clearer, ... "from the perspective of the philosophical quest for certainty in an absolute standpoint, these worlds [of knowledge] are worlds in which we are unfree, caught up in the bondage of an interest structure which we do not comprehend in itself", p53.

¹⁵⁰ Hegel, *The Logic*, 1991, p 61.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 1991, p12.

¹⁵² See Flay, 1984, for a comprehensive discussion of this problem.

¹⁵³ Hegel, 1977, paras 79, 80, 81, 87, 89. Determinate negation [Reclam, pp.70-3 „bestimmte Negation], ... "as a determinate negation, a new form has thereby arisen, and in the negation the transition is made through which the progress through the complete series of forms comes about of itself". In other words, the determined thrust of Being to reach the truth of itself and the world is in itself the truth which comes as a revelation given by Hegel, see also para 670-1, where the ... "reciprocal recognition which is absolute Spirit" ... is also the basis for ... "the assurance of Spirit's immanent self-certainty" ... "it is the God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge". Finally, para 808, where he says of the World Spirit. ... "[its] goal is the revelation of the depth of Spirit, and this is the absolute notion". Hegel's notion of determinate negation is one of the most fundamental components of his philosophy and one of the most heavily criticised. For a defence of Hegel's doctrine of 'essence' from the charge that he denied the law of contradiction see Hegel's *Metaphysics and the Problem of Contradiction* by Robert Pippin, in Stewart, 1996. See para 80 where he says ... "Hence the progress towards this goal is unhalting, and short of it no satisfaction is to be found on

In Hegelian terminology determinate negation is a term which is synonymous with the practical reflexivity of phenomenology *per se*, that is, with the process of thought categories examining themselves. The issue here is the explanation for change which lies at the heart of Hegelianism, why should something which is self-identical change and can an essence both be and not be? As Robert Pippin has noted, this problem is so complex that it would undoubtedly require a volume of interpretation four hundred pages or more in length which would, in turn, simply duplicate the size and scale of the *Logic*.¹⁵⁴ The best that can be achieved here is to briefly summarise Pippin's commentary on the *Logic*.

Hegel's understanding of contradiction is not, as Russell has charged, just to assert that Hegel confused the "is of predication" with the "is of identity", in other words, that something can be both P and not P, a conception that is a ... "trivial and stupid confusion", claimed Russell. However, Hegel does hold that there is a difference between essence and appearance, and that there is also an identity between these, but as Pippin suggests, Hegel

...argues that the "essence" of illusory being is, properly understood, the moments of Schein [appearance] itself, that there is no essence behind the phenomena, but that essence itself is the "recollection" (Erinnerung) of the process of phenomenal change itself (when phenomenal is meant in its Kantian sense, or as subjectively conditioned appearances).¹⁵⁵

Hegel's point in this procedure, according to Pippin is to,

...insist that we can never be satisfied with simply predicating a universal of some particular (or of another universal for that matter, as in generic essences).¹⁵⁶

Determinate negation then, concludes with "Absolute Knowing" as the revelation of the role of a recollective process¹⁵⁷ where,

any of the stations on the way". On the 'completion' see "Absolute Knowing" and retrospective knowledge of change see paras 394, 437, 800 & 803.

¹⁵⁴See Pippin, p240, in Stewart 1996.

¹⁵⁵Ibid, 1996, p246.

¹⁵⁶Ibid, 1996, p250.

¹⁵⁷Ibid, 1996, para 80.

..knowledge no longer needs to go beyond itself, where knowledge [does find] itself, where notion corresponds to object and object to notion.¹⁵⁸

Or again, as he said in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*,

...it *is* what the thing is not.¹⁵⁹

The "natural consciousness", for its part, is able therefore, to be both self-identical and [potentially] different. One analogy, again taken from Pippin, might be to compare the disruption within the "natural consciousness" with that of the seed of a plant. "A plant "is not" its seed or blossom or fruit, but neither is it something "other" than the becoming of these moments".¹⁶⁰ Thus the properly spiritual and philosophical point of view pre-supposes the end of alienation (*Entfremdung*), understood as man's estrangement from his own self-knowledge. "Absolute Knowing", which is an absolute after all, is Hegel's term for this self-knowledge. The end of alienation is, therefore, logically consistent with the Holy Trinity invoked by Hegel's religious system. This is because only with the completion of the growth in the plant are we in a position to see becoming in itself. Thus it logically follows that one can only see the recollective understanding as alienation ends with its own self-completion. The "natural consciousness" according to this logical account is both animal and man, both organic and spiritual but it is also neither, it is becoming itself as a kind of closure.

I would now like to turn to another set of arguments for believing that Hegel sought closure and reconciliation in his system, to Hegel's account of Death, to his historical account of 'reality', then in section II to a quite different kind of evidence, to the notion of *Geist* and the community which Hegel held to be the Holy Ghost and finally in section III, to the concept of the 'privileged standpoint' of the "self-thinking idea", or God the Father.

¹⁵⁸Hegel, 1977, para 80, Reclam, p71, Solomon, 1985, p15, while Solomon, with some justification, might assert that the very nature of the phenomenological project might exclude the possibility of a single and eternal view of the cosmos he does not seem to take on board the notion that this fact in itself might well be the absolute.

¹⁵⁹Hegel, 1977, para 3.

¹⁶⁰ This same point is made by Hegel in his Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, he says "...just as the seed bears within it the whole nature of the tree and the taste and form of its fruits, so also do the first glimmerings of spirit contain the whole of history", 1987, p83.

The idea of death in Hegel's religious thought, and by implication, that of resurrection, is central to Hegel's ontology as a whole. Death makes its appearance in a number of important places during the course of the *Phenomenology*. Death is fundamentally important in the dialectic of Master and Slave,¹⁶² in the dilemma of Antigone and during the terror of the French Revolution. There are also a number of significant passing references to death, such as the one included in the Preface where he says,

...the life of spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it.

Much later in the text he tells us, "It [Spirit] wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself"..¹⁶³: a turn of phrase which recalls some of the nihilistic literature of the post-revolutionary period that I mentioned in the Introduction. Such imagery prepares us for some of Hegel's most disturbing passages in which he describes the Thermidor as a nightmare of nihilism, a world

¹⁶¹ In the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion of 1827, 1988, Hegel says, "God has died, God is dead- this is the most frightful of all thoughts that everything eternal and true is not, that negation itself is found in God", p405. And further on he says, "God, that is to say, maintains himself in this process [of resurrection] and the latter [the death of God] is only the death of death", p465. And of the resurrection he concludes, "This is the presentation of the second [element of] the idea, the idea in appearance, the eternal idea as it has become [present] for the immediate certainty of humanity, i.e. as it has appeared. In order that it should become a certainty for humanity, it had to be a sensible certainty, which, however, at the same time passes over into spiritual consciousness, and likewise is connected into the immediately sensible- in such a way that the history of God is seen in it, the life that God himself is", p470.

¹⁶² Hegel, 1977, paras 178-96. Reclam pp.140-49. Again the master-slave relation is also one of the most controversial and contested of Hegel's concepts. Again in the "philosophical" reading of Flay, 1984, pp.17-28, he takes the view that Hegel's use of the term is neither the critical Socratic questioning of the subject-matter nor the .."way of the subject-matter itself.. but is representative of the myriad presuppositions which are implicit within all thought forms in relation to any individuals activities". Flay calls these .."praxical presuppositions", p2. Such a reading might well be absorbed within the so-called materialist accounts of the master-slave section. The class struggles of the feudal order which Hegel's medieval terminology evokes might well be thought to be based on the operation of such praxical presuppositions: such as, why do we worship the Lord? Why am I tied to this land? Or even, why do I have to yield to the expropriation of my produce? If this sounds a rather literal interpretation then consider Flay's own examples of praxical pre-suppositions on p20. It has now become something of a commonplace to regard Marx's description of political and social struggle in Capital between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as a materialist re-working of the master-slave relation, this latter view was certainly adopted by Alexandre Kojève, 1989. 1970-3. There is some evidence from the text to suggest that Hegel himself may have had any, or all of these meanings in mind. In the opening paragraph of the section he said, The notion of its unity [Self-Consciousness] in its duplication [i.e. facing another Self-Consciousness] embraces many and varied meanings, para 178. In short, Flay's understanding of the "dialectic", when looked upon in this light, is increasingly similar to the notion of the unity of theory and practice of Marxist theory which he claims to reject.

¹⁶³ Hegel, 1977, Preface, para 32, Reclam, pp. 32-3, and para 590, Reclam, pp.417-8, also see Gunn, 1987.

in which spiritually crumpled revolutionaries step forth upon the guillotine to meet their death with arms aloft and heads held high. Both the leaders of the Revolution and innocent bystanders alike meet their end in what amounts to an ecstasy of slaughter, self-destruction and meaningless carnage. Yet, freedom, as we have already seen, finds itself here "in utter dismemberment", at the very moment of death the truth of freedom as entirely negative is both the "refreshing bath", in that from that point on all past structures of self-understanding are stripped away, but also we see that freedom is also full of dread because in the immediate aftermath there is nothing to fill the *form* of freedom with any *content* since all such content belongs to the past. Death presents consciousness with the horrifying prospect of nothingness,¹⁶⁴ it is the opposite of all life or the ... "negative", the termination of everything which is sought after and enjoyed through life. The ... "coldest meanest thought of all", said Hegel, is the ... "death that is without any significance".

Furthermore, the driving ontological impulse provided by the fear of death is not something which is negated with the end of estrangement in Hegel's thought. Rather, one seeks immortality in 'earthly' deeds, in other words, in the second sense of alienation as that of externalisation. Just as Jesus died on the cross only to rise again and unite with the totality of the Absolute, the Self-Consciousness which deliberately teeters on the edge of death before death itself is realised, will rise to the level of world historical significance once such self-sacrifice is recognised. This is often the role which is fulfilled by Hegel's "world-historical individuals". The maiutic impulse which is born from the resolution of the master-slave struggle and which gave rise to philosophy in the first instance is also the result of this same fear. Thus significantly, only with the wilful risking of life and only during the course of actions which typically entail a violent disregard for this life, only through some form of conscientious transgression, are existential and philosophical barriers overcome in Hegel's account.

Encounters with death are never rejected in Hegel's thought as something too foolish or morbid for serious philosophical contemplation or lacking in existential significance, rather human beings are constantly reminded ... "by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it"..., and in the political and social processes of 'life', that death is the final word on all matters. Funerals and honouring the life of the dead, as in the case of Antigone, life or death struggles for prestige, as in the case of the Master-Slave relations, the intellectual battles of

¹⁶⁴See Camus, 1971, pp.103-16.

Reason over abstract principles in the service of truth which were customary during the Enlightenment, and the struggle by peer groups and the final self-sacrifice of one's life and the acceptance of death during the Revolution were, according to Hegel, the means through which a particular life finds true meaning, fills the form of freedom with content. True meaning here is the preservation and transcendence [*Aufheben*] of *Geist* over death.

Certainly, "Self-Consciousness" knows that eventually it must cease to exist, but the idea of death is the... "hard saying" and the necessary reminder of the need to actualise in the world. For Hegel, this process is the ... "the magical power that converts it [consciousness] into being", as such this final move towards a subjective understanding of one's self-potential, towards the "good infinity" and metamorphoses, all of this is religiously represented in the final sacrifice and reconciliation of Jesus, the "Son" of God.

One of Hegel's most trenchant criticisms of Christian thought is also to be found here for he held that such failures of self-understanding are the very stuff of difference between alienated and non-alienated existence. The Unhappy Consciousness of the *Phenomenology*, for example, seeks what amounts to a living death in this world and then transcendence in the next world, a ... "God knows where?" says Hegel.¹⁶⁵ Thus alienation continued throughout the period of spirits unfolding until the revelation of knowledge and self-autonomy which is in harmony with its content.¹⁶⁶

The entire process which has been outlined here, the growing self-awareness of the inward depths of subjectivity, the expansion of externalised autonomy and the eruption of negativity from within the "natural consciousness", are all fundamental elements of the dialectic. However, the classical example of the dialectic as the "Son" is to be found in the section of the *Phenomenology* entitled "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage" and in the sections on "Stoicism", "Scepticism" and the "Unhappy Consciousness".

¹⁶⁵See *The Philosophy of Right*, 1991, pp. 14 & 20.

¹⁶⁶To elide the German terms *Endlichkeit* and *Entäußerung* [infinity and self-objectification] as I do here legitimately follows Hegel's use of the terms where bad infinity is in fact a form of alienation as self-estrangement and where good infinity is its opposite. While Hegel, long before Marx, held that damaging effects to individuality were always the end result of finitude and alienation, this is not always immediately apparent from the tone of the *Phenomenology*. Hegel's closing passage of almost poetic serenity in the *Phenomenology* strikes a very different note, more conciliatory, than that of the struggle between the ... "expropriators and expropriated" ... which forms the dramatic finale to Marx's acknowledged masterwork [*Capital*].

These terms were used by Hegel to describe the dialectical struggles for self-mastery which occur both between individuals and within individuals.

There have always been at least two major streams of interpretation of the master-slave dialectic. On the one hand there is the literal reading which has always thought that Hegel's analysis is in some sense anthropological or ethical. In other words, that he is suggesting a struggle between actual Master types and Slave types, Lord over Vassal, Capitalist over Proletariat or Men over Women, or as in the ethical interpretation, Good struggles with Evil, or Jesus struggles with sin. Such a reading is typified by Marxists such as Kojève. On the other hand, there is also a tradition of Hegel scholarship which locates this Master-Slave struggle within the traditional concerns of Western philosophy. Readings of this kind suggest that Master and Slave is a phenomenological metaphor for the self-reflexive cross-examination of philosophy itself. Allied with this account there is often some notion that this reading within, can also be viewed as some kind of psychological metaphor. I take both traditions to be perfectly legitimate on account that there is some textual evidence to be mobilised in each case and since they are not mutually-exclusive in any case. For the purpose of the present work this difference of interpretation is irrelevant since I would hold that both readings ultimately conclude on the theme of reconciliation, both, in other words, serve my purpose equally well.

In the case of the literal reading of the dialectic of Master and Slave, there is a struggle to the death for survival which metamorphoses into the first moment of recognition.¹⁶⁷ Ontological progress cannot logically begin with a fight which resulted in death in the first instance because there is no recognition submission and deference to be gained by the victor from such a fight. A corpse, by definition,

¹⁶⁷Hegel, 1977, para 178, where he says, "The detailed exposition of the notion of this spiritual unity in its duplication will present us with the process of recognition". The interpretation of the Lordship and Bondage section of the *Phenomenology* which is given above owes much to Kojève of course. It must be recognised that recent Hegel scholarship has taken issue with Kojève's interpretation in the strongest possible terms, [See P.T. Grier in Stewart, 1996 for example, where the former said, "Kojève's end-of-history thesis has no real grounding in Hegel's texts," p 186. Especially, continues Grier, the notions of the ... "fight for prestige carried out for ... recognition, the notion of ... history as the history of the working slave and similar ideas concerning ... master-slave ideologies". Leaving aside the obvious fact that the penultimate chapter of the *Phenomenology* is entitled "Absolute Knowing", or the notion of determinate negation which was outlined above [see the main text], Grier seems to have quite simply overstated his assertion that there is a lack of textual evidence for such claims. In one passage Hegel talks of ... "independent shapes, individuals submerged in the immediacy of life" [186] and in the next he says, "In so far as it is the action of the other, each seeks the death of the other" [187]. Towards the end of the master-slave section Hegel says, "Through work, however, the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is." [195]. And the point of the struggle? The concept of ... "honour" is mentioned, albeit in a much later context [594]. Clearly it is one thing to claim that such remarks are open to a variety of readings but it is quite another to suggest that Kojève didn't find such concepts in the text.

is an entity which is unable to provide such recognition. This struggle for recognition presupposes an actual world, thus the concrete historicity of Hegel's medieval metaphor [Lordship and Bondsman], since the fight can only begin when subject is confronted by some external object. In the passages entitled "The Truth of self-Certainty" Hegel said of the first moment of consciousness that "...the whole expanse of the sensuous world is preserved for it,.. and that the ..object of desire,.. upon which recognition depends is ...a living thing" ...¹⁶⁸

On the other hand, Hegel's description of the struggle for recognition can also be understood as an interrogation of the assumptions of the "natural consciousness" by the proper philosophical consciousness. As Joseph Flay has suggested, looked at in this way the Master-Slave dialectic becomes a sequence of moments in the life of the traditional philosophical inquiry and gives another level of meaning to this complex medieval metaphor. In this kind of account phenomenology is a kind of monological enterprise in the Cartesian tradition in which Hegel examines and re-examines the foundations of knowledge claims in the Western canon until eventually arriving at the appropriate juridical system for proper philosophical inquiry.

Never-the-less, as we have seen, whether understood metaphorically or literally, closure of a kind and reconciliation remain the end result. Again, leaving aside the question as to the ultimate correctness of Hegel's views, closure is presupposed in the metaphorical reading in which "Absolute Knowing" in the *Phenomenology* is taken to represent the complete unity of subject and object, in other words, when it is viewed as the completion of philosophical dualism, or even when taken as a procedural instrument with which to assess competing knowledge claims, since an incomplete procedural instrument is not one at all. This is self-evident in the very possibility of the exposé of the "natural consciousness". I would also hold that closure is presupposed in the literal reading in which death continually meets its other in the resurrection of recognition, whether the literalism is slave, proletariat or women matters little, the existential reality that is "life" is only complete when it recognises its opposite and when it includes freedom of mind *per se*, something denied in death but not in life. In any case, theologically, Hegel moves from the notion in the Early Theological Writings, of Jesus as but a teacher of Kantian ethics, towards a new concept of God as the self-recognition of God in

¹⁶⁸ Hegel. 1977, paragraph 167.

man. Thus the divine becomes a species of human fellowship, and this is the important point about death, the infinite is constituted through the finite.¹⁶⁹

I would now like to turn to a brief description of these phenomena, phenomena which constitute the second element of the Holy Trinity. In Hegel's religious thought this is the human community actualising itself, in religious terms it is the "Holy Ghost", and as part of the Trinity and as a part of the whole, the "Holy Ghost" must play its part to push Spirit forward towards reconciliation.

¹⁶⁹ See Westphal, 1992, pps 227-229, for more on the theme of spiritual reconciliation which is broadly in line with this reading. Also, again in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* of 1827, 1988, Hegel says, "...there are two conditions for this appearance" [of the unity of the human and the divine]. The first mode of revelation, says Hegel, is that which "...which leads as a whole to the elevation [of spirit], ...by way of nature and the world. The other mode, he continues, ...is the higher one and occurs through the finite spirit. This is what displays the interest of the standpoint at which we now find ourselves. Divinity is recognised by finite human beings in what is objectively available to intuition, sensibility, and immediate consciousness", p456. And there is also the following footnote from the lectures of 1831, "This is the appearance of God in the flesh,..... The possibility of reconciliation is present only when the implicitly subsisting unity of the divine and human is known. Human beings can know themselves to be taken into God only when God is not something alien to them, [i.e. not an accident],...but rather when they are taken up into God in accordance with their essence and freedom", p456. A later version of this lecture adds, "in accordance with their essence, freedom and subjectivity", same page. This is also self-evident from Hegel's conception of Christ as a free spirit. Christ the transgressor, says Hegel, "i.e. is free". p461. The point is that although human beings are finite their freedom is infinite, suggests Hegel, they come to know this through the resurrection.

...only that which externalises itself... obtains an actual existence¹⁷⁰

Hegel, 1806

II

The "actuality" of dialectic

The Holy Ghost is an objectification or externalisation of the particular consciousness called human Self-Consciousness, i.e. it is the spirit of the community, according to Hegel.¹⁷¹ This only raises the further problem of the sense in which the works of man could ever be thought to reach closure or summation, since taken at face value this seems to be a preposterous idea. Following the birth of consciousness in the maieutic dialectic of Master and Slave.¹⁷² Hegel immediately points out that this new consciousness, though an important historical advance, is pregnant with possibility, and that the new found freedom of the slave consciousness is in the first instance purely internalised, not yet a consciousness for the self.¹⁷³ Hegel calls this phenomenon Stoicism,¹⁷⁴ the Stoics, of course, are known for their philosophy of stringent ethics and rigid self-discipline.

Hegel characterised the position of the Stoics as one in which they denied the significance of external necessity, because the only thing that really mattered to them was the inner attitude that one adopted toward such circumstances.¹⁷⁵ To be sure, this stoical consciousness may have been an advance in terms of the growing self-awareness of individuality and of course, it certainly is over the slave who is simply an object for the master. But because the stoic is one who ignores or negates

¹⁷⁰ Hegel, 1977, para 298.

¹⁷¹ Hegel, 1988, p475, he says, "In the subsisting community the church is, by and large, the institution whereby [its] subjects come to the truth, appropriate the truth to themselves, so that the Holy Spirit becomes real, actual, and present within them and has its abode in them, whereby the truth can be within them and they can enjoy and give active expression to the truth of the spirit; it is the means whereby they as subjects are the active expression of the Spirit". In other words, the congregation in full voice is the living embodiment of both their own freedoms and subjectivity and that of God in the world, thus according to Hegel, the spirit of God is a major cultural force in *this* world, at the very least.

¹⁷² Returning to the theme of beginnings in Hegel's philosophy: the term maieutic is a useful one which encapsulates the notion of intellectual midwifery, and of the dialectical birth of recognition. The word maieutic has Socratic origins in that Socrates' mother was said to be a midwife, but the word is often used to describe intellectual birth processes more generally, in this case, recognition, see Flay, 1984.

¹⁷³ Hegel, 1977, para 197, Reclam p150, Hegel says, "In thinking, I am free, because I am not another, but remain simply and solely in communion with myself, and the object, which is for me the essential being, is in undivided unity my being-for-myself; and my activity in conceptual thinking is a movement within myself".

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 1977, para 198. Reclam p151, for a more detailed description of the Stoics and Hegel's less abstract statements on that school see The Hegel Dictionary, 1992, pp.262-65.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 1977, again see para 198, Reclam p151.

the real world, Hegel holds that *Geist* is practically taken back to the world of slavery.¹⁷⁶

This internalised manifestation of alienation occurs because the Stoic has turned her back upon the crucial, formative and independence creating role of objectification.¹⁷⁷ The notion of the Stoic, in reality as well as in the popular imagination, as one whose body is held in chains but whose Spirit is always free, is utterly rejected by Hegel, rather he said, ...“this its essence is only an abstract essence”. True independent consciousness can only exist and develop through the satisfaction of desire and creative activity in the real world, according to Hegel. In other words, real living freedom, the “self-thinking idea” must engage with the actual world, indeed can only come about through the self-conscious appropriation of nature that this notion of freedom implies. Hegel's point here is that the internal repression, self-control and self-mastery of the Stoics was simply a form of internally self-imposed bondage which was the inevitable consequence of their retreat into their own thought's as a form of free thinking. On the other hand, Hegel did find something to admire the Stoics for since he held that the raising of this internal slavery to the level of a World view during a period when slavery and actual bondage were still thoroughly wide spread was a “world-historical act”.¹⁷⁸

The next turn in the spirit of the community comes with a dialectical self-transformation within the independence of mind which Stoicism brings. The Stoical attitude is inherently and by definition, restless and unstable according to Hegel. Although the Stoic may remain wholly repressed, unable to affect the real world at will, the idea of a restless, self-directed and critical thought which is constantly in motion has emerged. Hegel describes this as ...“the actual experience of what the freedom of thought is”, or Scepticism. In other words, the price the Stoic has to pay for internal peace is the act of choosing *per se*. In a sense the Stoic must at the very least, choose to ignore her physical or emotional agonies, thus a measure of freedom is unavoidably and necessarily gained.

Again, the important point to bear in mind here is that the dialectic of the Stoic, the Sceptic and the Unhappy Consciousness, which I will briefly consider in a moment, are all forms of the Master-Slave struggle, and are, therefore, different modes of alienation. The dialectic of Scepticism is one of the most important of

¹⁷⁶Ibid, 1977, para 199, “This manifold activity [ie work] has now contracted into the simple positing of differences in the pure movement of thinking”, Reclam p151.

¹⁷⁷Ibid, 1977, para 202, Reclam pp. 153-4.

¹⁷⁸Ibid, 1977, paras 202-5, Reclam 153-57.

these early transitions in the *Phenomenology* because from this comes the notion of the unchangeable or Supreme Being [*Unwandelbare*], as such this is the birth of monotheistic religious experience, or of God himself.¹⁷⁹

In any case, Hegel tells us that Scepticism is the actual freedom of thought so cherished by the Stoics, this thought form is characterised by Hegel as choice selection and a shifting doubt about everything that is seen, heard and felt. This doubt, quite significantly, also extends to all ethical life and yet paradoxically the Sceptic continues to perform all the above functions of life and make decisions in the work-a-day world: a contradiction between ...“deeds and words”. Where the Stoical consciousness was once the unity of masterfulness and servility in a single Being, the Sceptic rather, is also the synthesis of the master and slave, but in the outward and external world says Hegel, these moments conduct themselves like the ...“wilful squabbling of children”.¹⁸⁰

According to Hegel, the doubting Sceptic is “self-infinite”, that is, when thinking in modes of doubt, as it were, it soon becomes apparent that such doubting could go on endlessly. Hegel calls this phenomenon the “hostility of thought against itself” in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*. However, doubting is always doubting something, thus doubting posits the object which is also, by definition, always singular, since an object in this sense must exist in both time and space. All doubting of singulars therefore, becomes a singular moment of Self-Consciousness i.e. for the doubt-er.

Amidst all of this difference then, is the stark relief of the ...“unchanging and genuine certainty of itself” as doubting subject. However, this latter moment of consciousness is actually an unconscious movement because it rambles between the “certainty of self” and systemic doubt, unaware that it has posited an unchanging moment, that is a consciousness that is certain of itself but does not exist in time or space. The eventual coming to consciousness of this unchanging moment is literally the birth of the notion of some infinite Being. The continuation

¹⁷⁹Ibid, 1977, para 228, as so often in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel only reveals what the definitive meaning of a concept is after he has used that concept many times over in previous paragraphs. In this particular case, the term Unchangeable is used many times before it is used in conjunction with the notion of a supreme Being [*Unwandelbaren Wesen*]. This phrase would remain ambiguous, read perhaps as unchanging essence, were it not for the fact that in context it makes an appearance while being juxtaposed with some notion of a mediator [*Vermittler*] and that in this passage there is a second sense of *Wesen* as will [*Willens*], a purely metaphysical aspect. This strongly suggests that here Hegel is talking of some form of infinite monotheist force and not only of the priest or minister, Reclam p168.

¹⁸⁰Ibid, 1977, para 205. Reclam pp.155-6.

of this dialectical movement Hegel describes in his account of the Unhappy Consciousness.¹⁸¹

Long before the Jena period of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel was interested in the *form* as well as the content of religion. As early as 1793, Hegel held that the most enduring spiritual obstacle which stood between the substantially incomplete *Geist* and "Absolute knowing"¹⁸² were the two halves of an un-reconciled Christianity, between what he called "objective" and "subjective" religion.¹⁸³ The failure of objective religion, especially true of Christianity, lay in the fact that essentially it was an enormous edifice of formalised, historical and theological rules, in short, it was a dogma. Therefore, it was not only a self-externalised body of knowledge but it was also beyond any conceivable comprehensive self-identification by ordinary people, especially the German people,¹⁸⁴ in other words, it was also an estrangement.

Hegel held that the form of religion, Christianity as *the* modern religion, was also profoundly alienating. In a significant analogy, particularly so when one considers the use of the pre-Revolutionary analogy, he compared objective religion with,

¹⁸¹Ibid, 1977, para 214, there is a brief summary of the dialectics which lead to this consciousness.

¹⁸²An incidental but not unimportant point concerns the coherence of the concluding chapter of the *Phenomenology*. The following story, though well known is seldom detailed: Hegel composed the closing chapter of the *Phenomenology* during the night and early morning of October 12th and 13th 1806. While he sat writing at his desk Napoleon's artillery were bombarding the town of Jena in preparation for an assault on the morning of the 13th. In the event Napoleon did enter the city as planned and the World Spirit himself passed below Hegel's window on horseback, [See the letters 71,73,74 & 95]. Hegel himself retold this tale in order to excuse the considerable disorder which is to be found in the *Phenomenology* generally, and in particular, with the concluding chapter at the fore front of his mind. In a letter to Schelling dated the 1st of May, 1807 he was to lament that, .."Working [my way] into the detail has, I feel, damaged the overview of the whole [Phenomenology]. This whole, however, is itself by nature such an interlacing of cross-references back and forth that, even were it set in better relief, it would still cost me much time before it would stand out for yourself all too easily- that even individual sections in many respects would still need further groundwork for them to be brought into subjugation". Commenting on the last section in particular he continues, .."Make allowances for the greater want of form in the last sections by recalling that I actually completed the draft in its entirety in the middle of the night before the battle of Jena", p80. Thus the idea that every line of the *Phenomenology* is perfectly ordered and that each and every sentence is pregnant with meaning, is clearly wrong. The chaotic organisation of the *Phenomenology* is also one of the themes of Solomon, 1985, although I disagree with his view that Hegel is an appalling writer.

¹⁸³See the Tübingen Essay of 1793: Religion ist eine, [In Harris, p484, Appendix]. Even from this early period Hegel makes a clear distinction between an objective religion ie the pictorial religion of the various holy books which are the equivalent of the naturalist's cabinet, full of dead insects, dried plants, animals which are stuffed and pickled, and the more deeply felt subjective form of religion. The latter on the other hand is alive, as we are, because it is principally held as sentiment, thus internalised and because it also effects our outward behaviour.

¹⁸⁴Thus in his Early Theological Writings Hegel doubts the value of a form of religion which is essentially Middle Eastern rather than "Teutonic".

The man who builds himself a palace on the model of the great house- lives in it like Louis XIV in Versailles, he hardly knows all the rooms in his property, and occupies only a small sitting room-,

Rather, he believed in this early fragment that,

....Religion must help man build his own little house, a home which he can call his own, how much can it help him in this? ¹⁸⁵

The new *form* of thought which humanity could be happy with and at home in was intended to be the concluding concepts of his *Phenomenology*, his *Logic* and the final volume of the *Encyclopaedia*.¹⁸⁶ However, the actual difference between the form of *Phenomenology* and that of religion is that while the content of Christianity might well be the true, its promise could only be fulfilled in an other world, according to Hegel, thus leaving a number of unexplainable mysteries, thus alienation's, in this world. Furthermore, the legitimacy of this whole enterprise hinged upon the scriptures themselves, scripture which Hegel was undoubtedly unhappy with. The "Absolute Idea", on the other hand, held out the promise of subject-object identity which cast out any notion of either ontological or epistemological understandings of alienation.

The point is that the form of alienation as Unhappy Consciousness is not unlike that of schizophrenia, we can see that it is suffering from what can best be described as a form of split personality.¹⁸⁷ Hegel holds that this is a form of consciousness which would always be problematic and inherently unstable.¹⁸⁸ Further, having a "mind of ones own"¹⁸⁹ can never lead to 'victory' under such circumstances because victory would, by definition, involve the partial defeat of the other within and vice versa.¹⁹⁰ In other words, the development of freedom and of the desire this freedom implies would lead to guilt and disappointment, then by turns, to the self-renunciation of freedom itself and hence to a form of crippling individuality. The even more damaging repercussion, one may recall, was that the

¹⁸⁵See Harris, pp.494-5.

¹⁸⁶See the Earliest System Fragment quoted earlier. Also I would draw the readers attention to the Preface to the *Phenomenology* where he says, "To help bring philosophy closer to the form of Science, to the goal where it can lay aside the title 'love of knowing' and be actual knowing- that is what I have set myself to do", Para 5, Reclam, p 12. A truth which we are later told is constitutive of being-in-itself [An-sich-sein], Para 82, Reclam, p72 [An-sich heit Wahrheit].

¹⁸⁷See the editorial comments by R. Kroner to the theological essay of 1800, UPP, p309. [ETW]. Also the recent book by Danial-Berthold Bond, *Hegel's Theory of Madness*.

¹⁸⁸Hegel, 1977, para 206, Reclam p157.

¹⁸⁹Ibid, 1977, para 196, Reclam pp.148-9.

¹⁹⁰Ibid, 1977, para 209, Reclam pp.158-9.

unity of Master and Slave ideologies within Scepticism gave rise to the notion of the Unchangeable,¹⁹¹ the single Supreme Being, the Unhappy Consciousness is but the mirror image of that same moment.

One can now see why, in Hegel's view, this particular temper is alienated from his/her true essence. The idea of a supreme unchanging being, which in turn, is given priority as a thought form over every other, or again, as Hegel would suggest, becomes ...“essential”. As such this essential shape of *Geist* is something painful and agonising because it mobilises and resonates with the thought of life's opposites, death, eternity and nothingness. In other words, this dialectic of the Unhappy Consciousness is the ancient religious duality of body and soul in which subject stands opposed to object.¹⁹² Negation and eternity are universals, thus the opposite of these qualities is embodied in the finite and particular which is this form of individuality. Alienation here consists in the dual quality of the struggle, of the working in and on the world and in the feeling of separation from something which is much greater. In this alienation the human community are not at one with God, they are not God but remain contingent rather like puppets dangling on a string.

In one telling passage Hegel makes it quite clear why, in his view, this Unhappy Consciousness remains such a miserably unhappy creature,

[it]..does not know that this its object, the Unchangeable, which it knows essentially in the form of individuality [God], is its own self, is the individuality of consciousness.¹⁹³

In addition to the centrality of these communal self-alienation's it is also worth noting that for Hegel there is no question that Christianity as a cultural phenomenon can transcend its own contradictions between this world and the next while remaining within the boundaries of liturgical orthodoxy. For example, with the advent of Christian moral culture new expressions of mis-recognition take centre stage. Again returning to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel argues,

¹⁹¹Ibid, 1977, paras 208 & 643. Reclam p158 & pp.452-3. On the subject of the first appearance of God in the text: it is worth noting that although, according to Findlay's analysis [Miller trans], God does not appear until paragraph 671, Findlay also teeters on the brink of introducing “Him” during the passages from 210-15.

¹⁹²Ibid, 1977, para 209, Reclam pp.158-9.

¹⁹³Ibid, 1977, para 216, Reclam p162.

...obedience to service and praise, by setting aside sense-knowledge and action, produces the consciousness of unity with the absolute being, though not as a unity which is actually perceived; on the contrary, this service is only the perpetual process of producing that unity, a process which does not completely obtain its goal in the present..¹⁹⁴

Again as in the case of the passive Stoic, the Christian form of religion simply cannot absorb the truth of "actuality". Later with the passing of the Roman civilisation into the medieval Christian period, this theme dominates Hegel's analysis, the post-Roman world is also the world of the Unhappy Consciousness. He says, for example,

The whole, therefore, like each single moment, is a self-alienated actuality; it falls apart into a realm in which Self-Consciousness as well as its object is actual, and into another, the realm of pure consciousness which, lying behind the first, is not a present actuality but exists only for faith.¹⁹⁵

This theme of the alienated form of religion is taken up again in the later chapter on religion where he concludes,

The Spirit of the community is thus divided from its religious consciousness, which declares, it is true, that in themselves they are not divided, but this merely implicit unity is not realised, or has not yet become an equally absolute being-for-self.¹⁹⁶

Hegel pointed towards the perpetual spiritual conflict within and between communities, he expected that this was likely to continue. This was because the diversity of forms provided by the Protestant impulse, [in turn an implicit product of the Christian doctrine of individualism], could only create doctrinal schisms over meaning.¹⁹⁷ Thus he could complain that ... "the actual world is still disrupted".

¹⁹⁴Ibid, 1977, para 534, Reclam p379.

¹⁹⁵Ibid, 1977, para 486, Reclam pp. 345-7, paragraphs 484 to 486 are a brief and concise summary of the decline of Roman Law and Christianity into Enlightenment. Reclam pp.344-7.

¹⁹⁶Ibid, 1977, para 787, Reclam pp.549-50.

¹⁹⁷Hegel comes close during these discussions, to some kind of anticipation of the effects of Protestant inner-worldly asceticism not unlike that described by Max Weber. Of course, it is open to question as to whether or not Hegel actually has either Protestantism or Lutheranism in his sights here, but it does not seem unreasonable given the attention he devotes to religions of the world more generally. For his views on the rights of Protestants see the ETW, UPP, pp.126-31.

Only with the complete transcendence and end of estrangement, could the certainty-of-self fully emerge.

So both the medieval subject with which we began, with the master-slave struggle, and their Ministers, are wretched and unhappy creatures. According to Hegel, the latter are described as those that completely fail to come to terms with their own freedom of Self-Consciousness.¹⁹⁸ The Minister, for example, gives up *his* own individuality in the act of presenting his judgements as those of God and the former, like the latter, the ordinary subject of Christianity, fares little better because he defers to the priest and like the priest he has to deny himself the pleasure to be found in the real world and in working to satisfy earthly desires. Here Hegel points out that they must continually engage in ...“fasting and mortification’s” before this universal entity. This desperate situation amounts to nothing less than the self-deprivation of both inner and outer freedoms, in short, such a Being denies itself full individuality and is quite simply self-alienated.¹⁹⁹

More importantly, this self-alienation of the community’s religious leaders, between the community and between all of them and God amounts to a further self-alienation which can only be completed when the self-understandings of these same agencies are self-identical with the goals, purposes and processes of God himself as the “self-thinking idea”. Thus only in the final “Holy Trinity” of God himself do the parts become one. However, before we move on to chapter two and the production of nihilism I would like to conclude this chapter by briefly considering the ultimate concept of this Trinitarian conception, God the Father and the “self-thinking idea”.

¹⁹⁸Hegel, 1977, para 228, Reclam pp.168-9.

¹⁹⁹Ibid. 1977, para 229 & 673. Reclam p169 & p474.

The perspective adopted by the philosophical history of the world is accordingly not just one among many general perspectives, an isolated abstraction singled out at the possible expense of the rest. Its spiritual principle is the sum total of all possible perspectives.²⁰⁰

Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*

III

The 'privileged standpoint'

Famously, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* ends with what has often been taken to be God's own recognition of himself.²⁰¹ While the justification for this interpretation might be sound enough, given what we know of the development of 'God' in Hegel's thinking, this startling claim seems less than obvious if the *Phenomenology* is taken to stand alone. However, what does seem to be beyond dispute is that the concluding paragraph of the *Phenomenology* does contain all the elements for the completion of the concept that is expressed in Hegel's method of historical writing, the mode which he called "philosophical history".²⁰² I would like to contend that this mode of writing amounts to a 'bird's eye' or Godlike overview of human affairs which is synonymous with Hegel's logical account of God the Father as the "Absolute Idea" or the "self-thinking idea".

We have seen how those phenomena which Hegel described in the flow of determinate negation, the series of recollections of development and resolution of the subject-object problem both abstractly and concretely, were actually played out in the various modes of self-alienation's. However, it is still necessary to follow through at least one example, in outline, of Hegel's historicist account of the development of critical thought itself before we come to some assessment of the

²⁰⁰ Hegel, 1997, p30.

²⁰¹ Hegel ends the *Phenomenology* with the somewhat ambiguous quote from Schiller's *Die Freundschaft*, which runs, "...from the chalice of this realm of spirits foams forth for Him his own infinitude", 1977, para 808. A.V Miller has translated the German personal pronoun ihm as "Him" with a capital "H" obviously to suggest that the person in question is God. More cautiously, I would suggest that within the context of the more general summing up which this paragraph does, suggests rather, that this "Him" is he who believes that the process of science and has demonstrated the validity of this science (Wissenschaft). It remains an open question at this stage in Hegel's thought whether this will ultimately characterise his conception of God or not. However, in the much later *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* of 1827, Hegel 1988, says, "But we have already seen what God is in and for himself: he is this life-process, the Trinity, in which the universal places itself and therein remains identical with itself. God, in this element of eternity, is the conjoining of himself with himself, the *closure* of himself with himself", [my emphasis], p403. The ultimate veracity of Hegel's religious perspective is not the issue here, however, the religious framework does suggest nothing less than a Godlike capacity to survey the course of history on the part of the phenomenologist.

²⁰² Hegel, 1987, p12.

nature of the complete 'privileged standpoint'. One clear example of this is to be found in Hegel's appreciation of classical studies.

In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* Marx said,

The greatness of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and its final product- the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creating principle, is on the one hand that Hegel conceives of the self-creation of man as a process, objectification as loss of the object, as externalisation and the transcendence of this externalisation.

Marx appears to find an accurate characterisation of Hegel's *Phenomenology* until he says,

This means, therefore, that he grasps the nature of labour and understands objective man, true because real, man as the result of his own labour.²⁰³

In this remarkable statement Marx openly gives Hegel the credit for a discovery that Hegel did not make, unless that is, one adopts a kind of Feuerbachian position and conceives of Hegel's concept of God as but a self-supporting and self-directed community of workers. Marx considers Hegel's notion of man's self-estrangement to be synonymous with that of his objectification. Thus, for Marx, objectification within bourgeois economy is but a form of self-estrangement, it is not a manifestation of one's concrete personality, as it is in Hegel thought. Bearing this Marxist re-interpretation in mind, and leaving aside the larger question as to whether Hegel or Marx is ultimately correct about such matters, Marx's re-reading of alienation suggests that reconciliation is not a goal of the *Phenomenology* since the concept of externalisation appears to be incompatible with his concept of freedom.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, this 'left' Hegelian critique attempts to wrestle the restless core of dialectic free from Hegel's system. However, as we have also seen, in the self-division of man typified in the life of Christ, or in the example of Stoicism and Scepticism in the *Phenomenology*, we see that this same division was expressed in and through the "hostility of thought against itself", i.e. it

²⁰³Marx, 1975, pp.385-6.

is but one part of the “self-thinking idea” in the process of its self-resolution. This is the process which leads towards the ‘absolute standpoint’.

The *Phenomenology* was never the kind of project which would lend itself easily to explanations of Hegel method, why he took what elements he did to be contingent and fleeting as opposed to those he held to be both necessary and eternal. Indeed in a famous book that first brought Hegel to the attention of English speaking readers in 1865, by Stirling, called *The Secret of Hegel* (it has often been remarked upon that Stirling himself may have found the secret but he seems to have been reluctant to part with it). In any event, Hegel set himself the task of explaining his method in his, *The Science of Logic* and in his *Logic* lectures. However, in the dense analysis he provides in his *Introduction to the Lectures on World History*, entitled, *The Varieties of Historical Writing*,²⁰⁴ Hegel distinguishes between three types of history which appear to emerge from his thought on logic. These modes of historical writing are original or intuitive, reflective and finally, the philosophical mode.

In the first of these, original history, the writer narrates events in which he has participated in some fashion, thus the spirit of such writing is immediate and non-analytical, the presuppositions, assumptions and dogmatism of the writer is left unquestioned in his own mind. Oral history might well be typical of this approach. However, in Hegel’s view such a history suffers from the obvious limitation that the narrative will only consist in a very limited perspective, perhaps in the events in which the writer participated. Thus, as in the case of a War, the perspective or feelings and motivations of the other side are hardly likely to be considered in such a report.

This major defect of particularity is surmounted in the second approach mentioned, the reflective form of history. In this second variety of historical writing the historian will attempt to apply general ideas and conceptions which would enable him/her to impose some order on entire epochs. Thus they would retrospectively survey contradictory accounts of a battle, weigh-up and assess different motivations in the views of the participants and question those assumptions and motivations from the writers own historical perspective. Unfortunately the flaw here is that the honesty and immediacy of the first kind of method is lost because the historian has imposed his/her own values and concepts unquestionably during the process of generalising.

²⁰⁴The Philosophy of Right, CUP, 1987, pp.11-24.

Finally, we come to Hegel's philosophical history. This is an attempt to yield a method which can utilise the best of both forms of historiography but which can also move beyond the limitations of each. Necessarily more complicated however, this latter method is also epistemologically identical with Hegel's theory of knowledge more generally.²⁰⁵ As the Frederick C. Beiser suggests, Hegel,

...demands that the philosopher bracket his own principles and presuppositions and permit consciousness to examine itself according to its own standards. The philosopher will then find that, through its self-examination, ordinary consciousness will be compelled to admit the truth of subject-object identity. Ordinary consciousness will discover through its own experience that the object is not given to it but essential to its own Self-Consciousness.²⁰⁶

Hegel's own apparent lack of success, when he tried to apply these rules of practical-reflexivity, would appear to throw the validity of his phenomenological project as a whole into doubt. I mentioned one such example in the Introduction to this thesis where we considered the role of women in Hegel's thought and another in the example of Marxism and Young Hegelianism more generally. There I noted, for example, that the feminist and deconstructionist account took the view that dialectic appeared to extend beyond Hegel's own system, and of course there is also the Marxist critique that I have just mentioned, which appears to support the Young Hegelian contention that dialectic is not successfully closed by Hegel's own system. But I say again, my point is not to irrefutably demonstrate that Hegel's system is true but just to demonstrate the much more limited claim that Hegel himself intended to close his system and find reconciliation. Philosophical history, "Absolute Knowing", the "self-thinking idea", the 'absolute standpoint' and what I will call the 'privileged standpoint' of critique, are all to be taken as different terms for the reconciliation of thought with itself in Hegel's philosophy. Nowhere is this role clearer than in the reasons and importance of the study of the classics in Hegel's view and the role such study plays in the development of philosophical historicism.

²⁰⁵Beiser, p284.

²⁰⁶Again, Beiser is more lucid in his description here than the present writer, also note that Flay's reading of the Phenomenology as the unity of the natural and the philosophical consciousness would seem to point in the same direction. While Beiser points out that Hegel does not always consistently pursue this method in the VGP.

In his speech to the Nüremburg Gymnasium of September 29, 1809, Hegel attempts to justify the continuing program of classical studies to his High School students. Concerned with the disproportionate growth of other aspects of the curriculum he notes, for example, that classical studies are now but “two-fifths of the whole curriculum”.²⁰⁷ Indeed Hegel expresses his “joy at the wisdom of our government” for protecting the status of classical education.²⁰⁸ Remarkably, Hegel takes the view in this speech that the primary role of classical studies is to *cause* alienation in his students. These students are to be immersed in a “remote and foreign world”, since such a world claims Hegel, is of natural appeal to young people since they are almost certain to be lured by “what is strange and far away”.²⁰⁹ Through such studies students will learn of the “centrifugal force of the soul”, as it appears to spin in every direction. The ultimate purpose of this confrontation and immersion in alienation is only a means to provoke the imagination, not to contribute to that deeper and altogether more profound rupture of the spirit which occurs between man’s reason and his intuition, or between his head and his heart said Hegel. A solution to this latter alienation can only be approached after much greater exertions. Hegel admired the classical world, he tells us in this same essay, because they were able to endure the “cruelty of fate”, they were certainly aware of the darker aspects of human existence and mortality and yet they were still able to draw a “veil” over such harsh realities, remaining all the while “free and moderate”. Drawing towards a conclusion he says,

It is a necessary illusion to begin by mistaking distance for profundity; in fact, the depth and strength to which we can attain can be measured only by the distance between the point to which we are fleeing and the centre in which we were engrossed at first and to which we shall finally return again.

Again, invoking the notion of a time-line which includes a beginning, a centre and an end, Hegel argues that the relative distance travelled by the human spirit matters less than, and is certainly no measure of, the completion of an idea that was already there in the middle of the time-line, the classical world, but is only revealed as such in the event of its own completion at the end. The ‘idea’ in question is freedom and the self-identification of that freedom with the necessity of the journey travelled. Thus the studious exertions of a speculatively driven

²⁰⁷ Hegel, ETW, 1975, p330.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 1975, p323.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 1975, p328.

alienation are the practical means through which Hegel wants to prepare his students for modernity itself. Classical studies, far from becoming more irrelevant, according to Hegel, are a necessary pre-requisite for the confrontation with disenchantment and the social atomism of modernity.

Hegel's perspective and his reading of *Antigone* should be seen in this educative and character building light. In *Antigone*, Hegel indicates that during the course of the heroine's troubles that it would have become apparent to the audience that what was formerly projected as but a smooth and harmonious world in *Antigone's* abiding duty and loyalty, between the family and its members and between the people and the King, was actually a "veil" placed over the true determinants of self-knowledge. Thus, Sophocles the poet and playwright is a kind of philosophical historian who brackets off the dominant attitudes of his own day and reflexively examines the respective attitudes of the actors involved. Like many other great personalities in Hegel's historical lexicon, Sophocles was able to appreciate life from the position of a 'privileged standpoint', not unlike his later description of just such a philosophical historian.

Hegel is deeply interested in the "beauty" of Greek tragedy of course, art which is produced in this particular case, by the almost unbearable phenomenon of witnessing an individual being ripped apart to the point of self-destruction is grasping towards the Absolute standpoint. Sophocles, for his part, in bringing this drama before the Athenian audience was forcing them to face the challenge that such apparently necessary developments entailed. Should *Antigone* obey her duty to the state or to a higher duty to her dead brother and to the immutable bonds of blood?²¹⁰ In this drama Sophocles successfully exposes what Hegel called the evil of ..."blank destiny".²¹¹ This is what contemporary social theorists would refer to as

²¹⁰Ibid, 1977, p267, it is worth noting here that Miller's otherwise lucid translation of the *Phenomenology* does not do full justice to the ambiguity of this section. His translation of the heading to the section reads a. The ethical world. Human and Divine Law: Man and Women. The use of the term Divine suggests a deity or monotheistic supreme Being, in English. There are three reasons for considering this inadequate: First of all, a monotheistic God would not be in keeping with the polytheistic Hellenic context, secondly, we know that, in common with many men of his generation, Hegel considered that the female sex were incapable of reason and therefore literally part of nature, see the PR, 1991, para 166 & addition, where women are compared with vegetables. Finally, we know that Hegel had an unusually intense relationship with his sister and that he thought of her in some sense as blissfully naive, in the positive sense. The German heading reads, Das menschliche und Göttliche Gesetz: der Man und das Weib. Here women are specifically contrasted with the notion of Göttliche Gesetz, e.g. with Godlike laws. This more ambiguous reading suggests that women are analogous, for Hegel, with a natural order of things and is more consistent with the context of the passages which follow where there is a relatively extended discussion of the ...natural ethical community...of the family, see the *Phenomenology*, para 450. Again it is also worth noting that on this subject, Solomon, 1955, is quite confusing. On the one hand he interprets the divine in the traditional manner out of context, then continues to talk of Hegel's understanding of the family as a state of nature, pp.542-4.

²¹¹Ibid, 1977, para 477, Reclam, p340.

determinism. Sophocles, finding a breach in alienation, opens open the “centrifugal forces of the soul”.²¹² In other words, Hegel holds that the revelation of this blank destiny by the Hellenic dramatist serves to bring about an expanding sphere of moral responsibility and personal autonomy. The fictional and mythical account of this young women's civil disobedience is a political and social drama of historical significance which serves to change the course of “actuality”.²¹³

This political drama makes possible a moment of recognition, not only in the text of the play itself, and here he quotes from Antigone, who said “Because we suffer we recognise we have erred”, but more importantly, it invokes a moment of recognition in the Athenian audience. The decisions which are taken by the key characters in the unfolding events of the play are taken by people who have unwittingly suspended their own autonomy. In reality Antigone is not bound by nature or familiar relations,²¹⁴ ...“this determination of immediacy means as such that nature enters into the ethical”... Athenian life is irrevocably changed, according to Hegel, in a moment in which an irrevocable spiritual advance is achieved.²¹⁵ Thus, the ethical life of the community moves from a position of non-recognition to one of partial-recognition. Henceforth, the ...“ethical shape of Spirit has vanished and another takes its place”. Explaining this development in world-historical terms Hegel continues,

This ruin of the ethical substance and its passage into another form is thus determined by the fact that the ethical consciousness is directed on to the law in a way that is essentially immediate. This determination of immediacy means as such that nature as such enters into the ethical act....

Following the collapse and passing of the Spirit of the ancients, Hegel said that another,

...[substance] emerges as a formal universality in them [individuals], no longer dwelling in them as a living Spirit; on the

²¹² See Hegel, ETW, 1975, p328.

²¹³ Antigone, Socrates and Jesus are all examples of how law-breaking can have a historic role in Hegel's historiography. See Jay Bernstein's essay entitled Conscience and Transgression: The Exemplarity of Tragic Action, in Browning, 1997. “Bernstein insists on the ineliminable moment of “conscience” and of transgressive action as the *sine qua non* of all recognition. Only by breaking rules can individual Self-Consciousness crystallise out of ethical life”, says Finlayson, also Browning, 1997.

²¹⁴ Hegel, 1977, para 473, Reclam, pp.334-5.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 1977, also para 473, Reclam, p334-5.

contrary, the simple compactness of their individuality has been shattered into a multitude of separate atoms.²¹⁶

This new "shape" of Spirit is the Roman citizen, the ... "empty unit" of Legal Status,²¹⁷ and so we see the dialectical advance into a new "shape" of consciousness, to use a 'track and field' analogy, we see the baton that is spirit subsequently handed on to the next bearer of the 'privileged standpoint' and so on until the final completion of the series in the Self-Consciousness of the 'Absolute Know-er' of philosophical history. The moral and ethical dilemmas thrown up in the Antigone are the most beautiful of the aesthetic works of man, according to Hegel, precisely because these contain the end or reconciliation of mind with itself, as beginning and end of spirit.

This journey of the spirit, advances however, only as far as the Godhead that is the "Son", thus though the journey might well advance philosophically and logically, indeed there may even be an advance in the march of the "Holy Spirit" towards final unity in the Trinity, the Trinity in-and-for-itself is completed with the return of the "Son" to the Father, in other words it can go no farther, in Hegel's view than in the revelation of Christ himself. In the early theological writings Hegel said of this event,

The culmination of faith, the return to the Godhead whence man is born, closes the circle of man's development. Everything lives in the Godhead, every living thing is its child, but the child carries the unity, the connection, the concord with the entire harmony, undisturbed though undeveloped, in itself. It begins with faith outside itself, with fear, until through its actions it has [isolated and] separated itself more and more; but then it returns through associations to the original unity which is now developed, self-produced, and sensed as a unity. The child now knows God, i.e. the spirit of God is present in the child, issues from its restrictions, annuls the modification, and restores the whole. God, the Son, the Holy Spirit!²¹⁸

In this remarkable theological passage written in Frankfurt around 1798-9 or at the very latest in 1800, in any case at least six years before the *Phenomenology*,

²¹⁶Ibid, 1977, para 476, Reclam p289.

²¹⁷Ibid, 1977, para 480 Legal Status, Reclam p339, Rechtzustand.

²¹⁸Hegel, 1992, p273.

we see that in all essentials, Hegel's mature thought is but a detailed elaboration of themes already present and complete. This passage also demonstrates that the 'left' Hegelian critique may have missed the point. In Hegel's account of the 'privileged standpoint' this moment is ultimately reached and finally consummated only after the unification of the Trinity. The Trinity was unified in religious form in the resurrection of Christ, the "Son", it was unified in spiritual form by the French Revolution, "The Holy Ghost" and finally, it was only realised in philosophy by Hegel's own revelation of "Absolute Knowing" in the 'privileged standpoint' of the philosophical historian.

Marx, for example, misses the point here because he conflates estrangement and objectification. Shlomo Avineri trying to break free from this confusion says,

...the major difference between [Hegel and Marx] then has, however already been pointed out by Lukàc's; while Hegel sees alienation as a necessary aspect of objectification, Marx maintains that alienation does not reside immanently in the process of production itself, but only in its concrete historical conditions, therefore, there exists the possibility of ultimate salvation, whereas the Hegel one will never be able to dissociate the cross from the rose of the present.²¹⁹

I will return to this theme of Marx's turn towards the politics of "salvation" in Chapter IV. For the time being I note that the circle of estrangement is complete and transcended in Hegel's thought, the remaining "objectification's" are then but a series of particular developments which are left to the "Holy Ghost", i.e. the process of the civic development of the human community in accordance with the principles of this same unity, the stations of the cross in the present. Thus in Hegel's critique of Marx, as it were, the existence of "class-struggle" would not be interpreted as further evidence that objectification was but another form of estrangement but rather as an attempt to rationally work through the necessary mediations between private interests according to the *much larger* principles of the "Holy Trinity", the most important principle of which is mutual-recognition.²²⁰ I investigate why Marx is unable to do this when I come to consider his own form of eschatological thought.

²¹⁹ Interestingly, this quote is taken from Harris, in Stepelevich and Lamb et al, 1983, p52, where Harris takes the view that Hegel's version of alienation is more plausible here.

²²⁰ My sense of the term mutual-recognition, already mentioned (see above), will also be discussed in Chapter II, however, it has been claimed that Fichte discovered the principle of mutual-recognition in his deduction of the "Other" in his Foundation of Natural Law, see Bubner, 1997, p 78.

In the largely similar approaches of some Feminist and Deconstructive critiques there is a much greater challenge to the coherence of Hegel's thought. One may recall from the Introduction to this thesis that they have argued that Hegel makes claims regarding women and the family which exceed his system. In other words, because Hegel considered that women were forever destined to play a more 'natural' and earthy nurturing role in the family and that they were only capable of bonds which were brought about through the realm of feeling, not Reason. Thus, they argue, here is an example in which Hegel quite simply makes sexist claims which are not only unjustified by his system but mark the turning point of its dissolution. While it is not my intention to try and defend Hegel against such claims, since I am not entirely convinced that Hegel's position can be defended in any case, I would suggest that as in the case of the Marxist critique this defence would probably have to revolve around an interpretation of what Hegel's system is supposed to be and upon the nature of his notion of reconciliation.

In any event, the conclusions of the dominant feminist critique can be summarised as follows.²²¹ The idea is that because Hegel 'forced' a closure to his system, all manner of difference becomes a victim of identity logic and there is no credible dialectical logic left in his system. Thus identity logic becomes a method of domination and denial rather than reconciliation in Hegel's philosophy. Therefore, instead of a reconciliation which arises from latent contradictions which are supposed to entail unity or the identity-in-difference of subject and object, mind and matter, universal and particular, history and nature and between man and women. Rather there is simple domination of objects over matter, over the particular, over nature and over women and so on. In this sense then, both the feminist and Deconstructive critique of Hegel are the true heirs and successors of post-Marxian 'left' Hegelian critique more generally.

The more important point for the purpose of the present account is that in my view there is nothing in Hegel's analysis of Sophocles *Antigone*, or for that matter in Hegel's statements in the later *Philosophy of Right* concerning women and the family, that prevents Hegel from logically *attempting* to close his system. In other words, the reason he believed that it was time to try and close the system was provided by the *ex eventu* prophetic notion that the most open of all principles, the ascension of a social conception of adult autonomy, had been finally established

²²¹ Here I am paraphrasing from Mill's in Stewart, 1998, pps. 265-6.

here on earth by the events of the French Revolution. In this autonomy there is identity-in difference by definition. Thus Hegel's circle of circles, imagery he used in both the theological writings and in his *Logic*, remained a closed system but still retained the capacity to become an ever more inclusive circle. In the last paragraph of the last book of his *Encyclopaedia* for example, the "Absolute Spirit" appears to be dynamic rather than static, as a philosophical idea it is complete or "eternal" but "eternally [it] sets itself to work".²²²

Thus it appears that even in the case of Antigone, for example, we see that in the role of a woman *as a sister*, she is offered autonomy in Hegel's analysis since in the brother-sister relationship there is an absence of unequal and particular desires.²²³ Recall that Antigone found herself in such an impossibly tragic position because she was left with the stark choice of either obeying the civil law or obeying God's law, the ultimate circle of circles. In any case, one problem with this feminist account is that it breaks into the middle of Hegel's system to locate its critique, it is not clear to me that this 'historical' account of a woman's role in Ancient Greece and in Hegel's own day in the *Philosophy of Right*, is not a moment of dialectic before the final closure of the *Logic*. Of course, this is hardly an adequate defence of Hegel, the dialectician, since it is likely to lead to the further objection that if his own application of his method is to bring results then he should not have made such a mistake with regard to women in the first place. If he could make such a mistake how are we to test the veracity of his other views, such as those on the modern state and so on. This is a perfectly reasonable objection which cannot be adequately dealt with here, but I have indicated that the feminist critique is far from being a water-tight case.

It is still worth noting that one reason why Hegel found such aesthetic beauty in Sophocles' play was because Antigone heroically chose to obey the law which offered her the possibility of honour and recognition, she obeyed the basic tenant of the "Holy Trinity", which consists only in her participation in the dynamic play of recognition. In other words, Antigone, although allegedly cast in the hopelessly 'feminine role' ascribed by Hegel, one which was undisputedly sexist by all other accounts, does not prevent her from operating according to the higher principle of the Trinity or system. In both the *Phenomenology* and in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel may have attempted to use Antigone as an example of women's exemplary contribution to "family piety" but his own attempt to describe her in

²²² Hegel, 1990, p315.

²²³ Ibid, 1998, p 247.

such terms could not be so reduced within the totality of the system overall. In other words, despite Hegel's apparent denial of his own sexism, the principle of social-recognition held good whilst remaining within the explanatory power of the system as a whole, a fact that is also implied in the 'privileged position' of the philosophical historian.

As Jay Bernstein has indicated, within Hegel's gallery of individual spirits the most important figures are always those who are able to effect a shift of Self-Consciousness, even if it means taking part in forms of civil dis-obedience. This process is synonymous with the dialectical movement of the 'privileged standpoint,' whether it is that of a historian or of a playwright. Thus Jesus or Sophocles, or some of those who I have not considered, such as Socrates or Hegel himself, such types stand outside the system before the system's closure, and reflexively cross-examine their own thoughts and concepts. However, in Hegel's account such an examination leads one back into the system of logic itself, not through domination but through logical flows and categories, only now the system has become larger because the "self-thinking idea" of God *in-and-for-himself* remains a totality who simply becomes richer in his/her particular moments. Such moments would appear to include the developing subjectivity of women.

Never-the-less, whether Hegel's system can be defended or not, and I am aware of the limited nature of this argument, I would also like to argue that apart from the most recent forms of the 'left' Hegelian critique, such as the feminist one, there are other "aporias" of Hegel's system which demand our attention and which *appear* to burst forth from within his system.²²⁴ For it is clear that Hegel himself appeared to hold, from time to time, that Godlike freedoms did not necessarily lead to anything other than a form of free thought which was entirely in harmony with mans/womans new condition.²²⁵ In other words, freedom when understood as the social-recognition of absolute autonomy appears to be relatively unproblematic. Yet Hegel's disquiet with the French Revolution suggests that he did hold some reservations regarding that event and it is to these that I would now like to turn. I would like to consider a phenomenon which exerted enormous theoretical

²²⁴ In what follows I am indebted to Adorno, 1973, pps 361-365, where he points out that, "After Auschwitz, our feelings resist any claim of the positivity of existence as sanctimonious, as wronging the victims; they balk at squeezing any kind of sense, however bleached, out of the victims fate. And these feelings do have an objective side after events that make a mockery of the construction of immanence as endowed with a meaning radiated by an affirmatively posited transcendence". It seems to me that here Adorno throws out the greatest challenge to the immanence reading of Hegel's thought as system.

²²⁵ For example, in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, Harris translation, he says, "When we think freely, voyaging on the open sea, with nothing under us and nothing over us, in solitude, alone by ourselves- then we are purely at home with ourselves", paragraph 31.

significance for Hegel but which has been misunderstood by some Hegel commentators; the presence of nihilism in Hegel's system. As Hegel himself said in the *Phenomenology*,

If all prejudice and superstition have been banished, the question arises, What next? What is the truth Enlightenment has propagated in their stead?

He continued,

Since in this way it [Enlightenment] grasps in general every determinateness, i.e. all content and filling, as something finite, as a human entity and [mere] idea, absolute Being becomes for it a vacuum to which no determinations, no predicates, can be attributed.²²⁶

²²⁶Hegel, 1977, para 557, Reclam pp.394-5.

Thanks to the bath of her Revolution, the French Nation has freed herself of many institutions which the human spirit had outgrown like the shoes of a child.²²⁷

Hegel to Zellman, Jena, January 23, 1807

German idealism has been called the theory of the French Revolution.²²⁸

Herbert Marcuse

CHAPTER II

The Emergence of Nihilism

In what follows I shall reconsider Hegel's analysis of the French Revolution, and more specifically, the presence of Diderot in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. It is still the case that in most studies of this relationship Hegel's use of quotes from Diderot's remarkable text *Rameau's Nephew*²²⁹ are seldom explored.²³⁰ In section I I will briefly outline some of the ambiguity in Hegel's attitude towards the Revolution. In section II I will look at the formation of the 'privileged standpoint' against Enlightenment. In section III I will outline Hegel's use of Diderot's text in context and finally, we will finish on the theme of the new "shape" of spirit that animates much of Hegel's mature thought and on his political theory. It will emerge that while Hegel implicitly accepted that his own age was characterised by a new nihilism, which he himself set up in part in his "bitter criticism of the Terror", as it is characterised by Marcuse, Hegel does at least attempt to construct a political

²²⁷Hegel, 1984, pp.122-23.

²²⁸Marcuse, 1955, p3.

²²⁹Denis Diderot, 1966. It is also worth noting however, that although I have chosen the appearance of *Rameau's Nephew* here, the concept of irony, as developed by the Schlegel brothers might work equally well. Hegel says in his Lectures on Aesthetics, 1998, p63, the Schlegel's "...with their critical talent, put themselves near the standpoint of the idea, and with great freedom of speech and boldness of innovation". Although Hegel does go on to criticise them for not being systematic, and therefore unscientific, this remains high praise indeed. Just as God gives meaning so must his spiritual actualisation's, there would appear to be a fine dividing line between nihilism and the absolute in this account.

²³⁰See Solomon, 1985, p555 for example, where *Rameau's Nephew* is only allegedly absorbed into Hegel's text as a means to highlight the wit of the *philosophe*. Typical of this neglect is the fact that in over one hundred and fifty papers published over a twenty-five year period in at least one scholarly journal, there is not one explicit reference to Hegel's quotes from *Rameau's Nephew*, see the Owl of Minerva, vol 25, No 2. The only work I am aware of on this theme is David W. Price, "Hegel's Intertextual Dialectic: Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau* in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*", *Clio* 20, 1991, 223-33.

theory which takes this nihilistic problematic into account. As the contemporary German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas has pointed out while,

Hegel is not the first philosopher to belong to the modern age, he is the first for whom modernity becomes a problem.²³¹

Similarly, this nihilist moment, re-named *decadence* by Nietzsche, would later resonate with force against the modern notion of universal autonomy which gave it birth,

What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devalue themselves. The aim is lacking; "why?" finds no answer.²³²

Nowhere in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* do we find Hegel using the term nihilism, but I will hold that this is the problem that fills much of Hegel's political imagination from the period of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* through to the later *Philosophy of Right*.²³³ In Chapter I, we saw that for Hegel the necessary march of philosophy is presupposed in the unknown, which was in turn dependent upon an incomplete self-knowledge,²³⁴ this is his understanding of alienation [Entfremdung].²³⁵ We also saw how Absolute Freedom, a product of the Enlightenment, was consummated with completion of his philosophical project and in the absolute standpoint of the phenomenologist, this marked the end of alienation: thus enabling the full possession of the actual world by this same 'privileged standpoint'.²³⁶ This whole idea is also consistent with the etymological

²³¹Habermas, 1990, p43.

²³²Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 1967, p9.

²³³The word nihilistic does appear in the Miller translation, para 521. While this might well capture the essence of both the meaning and the context of the discussion of Diderot's text *Rameau's Nephew* [see below], the German in this passage is actually *zerreißende Urteilen* not *nihilismus* or *nihilistisch*. A more cumbersome but accurate literal translation would be a Judgement which tears to pieces.

²³⁴In very general terms this Hegelian notion of alienation is also reminiscent of Aristotle's usage where the latter says that man philosophises due to a sense of wonder.

²³⁵Hegel, 1977, para 596, The movement of the world of culture and faith does away with this [Greece and Rome] abstraction of the person, and, through the completed alienation, through the ultimate abstraction, Substance becomes for Spirit at first the universal will, and finally Spirit's own possession. The present thesis is necessary not least because of the confusion which often unwittingly accompanies the use of general terms such as alienation and nihilism. For example, after a lucid account of the development of the modern concern with alienation, post-revolutionary nihilism and the current melee of political thought, Darby, 1990, p216, concludes that one response to modern nihilism might be to return to philosophy, to our sense of wonder in the full Aristotelian meaning and to engage in utopian and imaginative thought projects. Yet as we saw in Chapter one of the present thesis this is exactly the kind of alienation which complete freedom has buried.

²³⁶Of course readings such as those of Flay might want to insist that it is one thing to provide warranted access to truth claims and a wholly different thing to extrapolate from this to ethical and political theories. Whether successful or not my point is always to suggest that this is actually the task Hegel set

origins and religious history of the concept of alienation itself. However, now I would like to take the argument one step further and demonstrate that, as one commentator has recently remarked, "The French Revolution,,,,, is seen by Hegel as the overcoming of alienation,..."²³⁷

In a concise passage, where he effectively summarised the journey he believed he had charted, Hegel was to say,

Here, [during the French Revolution]..knowledge appears at last to have become completely identical with its truth; for its truth is this very knowledge and any antithesis between the two sides has vanished, vanished not only for us or in itself, but for Self-Consciousness itself. In other words, Self-Consciousness has gained the mastery over the antithesis within consciousness itself.

Then he adds that, "This antithesis rests on the antithesis of the certainty of self and the object".²³⁸ This passage suggests that according to Hegel, the citizens of revolutionary Paris lived a life that was 'absolutely' true, in the special phenomenological sense that during the early days of the Revolution their Self-Consciousness was ultimately all they required to live *their* lives.²³⁹ However, the transition from alienation [Entfremdung] to "Absolute Freedom" and from alienation to "Absolute Knowing" is a difficult transition for Spirit in the *Phenomenology*, this fact clearly emerges from Hegel's ambiguous reading of the lessons of the French Revolution and it is to this ambiguous reading that I would now like to turn.

himself. Also see R.B Pippin's essay entitled, "You Can't Get There from Here: Transition problems in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*", Cambridge, 1993, p73.

²³⁷ See Norman, 1976, p105.

²³⁸ Hegel, 1977, para, 596.

²³⁹ Nietzsche for one understood the sense in which these revolutionaries were indeed the ... "last men".

...insanity- mania or frenzy, In the French Revolution,... the almost complete collapse of civil society caused many people to become insane.²⁴⁰

Hegel, Encyclopaedia

I

The French Revolution

There is a well known anecdote which goes that on the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, Hegel, then a nineteen year old student of the Tübingen seminary, joined his school friends Hölderlin and Schelling in planting a tree of liberty to celebrate what he later referred to as this ...“heaven transplanted to the earth”.²⁴¹ Yet, as some scholars have noted, Hegel always held a somewhat ambiguous and critical position concerning the social and political benefits of the Revolution no less than on the effects of the Revolution on philosophy as a science.²⁴² For example, the Hegel scholar Shlomo Avineri considers that for Hegel ..“the moral life of the spirit” which emerges from the ...“blood bath” of the revolution is essentially the geographic and spiritual extension of the Napoleonic Code which guaranteed some ...“conversation with the people such as a free press” and a ..“number of other important French inspired institutions”.²⁴³

Hegel interpretation is often caught between four political readings of the Revolution,²⁴⁴ Hegel is either viewed as a kind of reluctant revolutionary, as a conservative, as a liberal, or finally, as a theorist of totalitarianism. In the first view his tacit support for the revolution and his analysis of modern individualistic

²⁴⁰ Hegel, 1990, p135.

²⁴¹See The Hegel Dictionary, 1992, pp. 20-21 and the Phenomenology, 1977, paragraph 110. We also know from his letters and other testimony that Hegel celebrated Bastille Day all his life, see H.S. Harris in The Cambridge Companion to Hegel, 1993, p26. Also Avineri, 1972, p3. Remarkably, many scholars still consider the Phenomenology an apolitical text, some of these we have already considered such as J. Flay, where the Phenomenology is taken principally to be a philosophical text in the traditional sense. Others such as Solomon, 1985, feel able to assert that there is ...“no politics in the Phenomenology”, p16 & p516, and this despite the attention Hegel devotes to the principles, and events of the French Revolution, not to mention the evidence of the letters of the period.

²⁴²See Laurence Dickey's essay, “Hegel on Religion and Philosophy”, Cambridge, 1993, p307. The idea here is that philosophy became partisan and lost its power of objectivity with the revolution.

²⁴³See Avineri, Cambridge, 1972, pp.66-7. This is also reputed to be the view of Kojève who considered that the communist Chinese revolution of 1948 was simply the extension of the Napoleonic code in the East.

²⁴⁴The literature which debunks the notion of Hegel as apologist of the Prussian state or as totalitarian thinker has been decisive, see Knox's effective contextualization of Hegel's political positions vis a vis the Prussian policy of the period in his “Hegel and Prussians”, and Kaufmann's effective demolition of Karl Popper's claims in this latter regard, “The Hegel Myth and its Method”, both in Stewart, 1996.

freedom is often seen as one of the deep sources of European socialism or even of anarchism. In this case the Marxist critique of Hegel holds that Hegel was a supporter of bourgeois rights to be sure, but that the inner core of his method is revolutionary. Thus Hegel's alleged attempt to square his philosophy with Prussian hegemony in Germany is seen as largely a matter of unprincipled expediency. In the case of the second reading, Hegel is taken as a kind of Burkean conservative,²⁴⁵ in so far as he viewed the French Jacobins as naïve utopians who had abandoned all the organic and traditional institutions of the *ancien régime* in their haste to construct their new order.²⁴⁶ Here his support for the family and his alleged suspicion of one-sided freedom is marshalled as evidence that he considered human nature both rapacious and dangerous, an idea which is often rooted in biblical notions of original sin or upon concomitant notions of volcanic passions and romantic essentialism.²⁴⁷ In this account Hegel becomes the conservative defender of the religious and monarchical hierarchies of pre-Revolutionary Europe. In the third case, Hegel's ambiguous defence of the Revolution is taken to be an example of his power politics in which everything, even the most flagrant abuse of power, can be legitimately defended by the powerful, thus Hegel's attitude in support of the Revolution is taken to be further evidence of his totalitarian outlook.

²⁴⁵Jürgen Habermas, in his *Theory and Practice*, takes a more complicated view of the nature of Hegel's political conservatism. Habermas takes the view that Hegel, quite unlike Burke, did not leave the actualisation of abstract Right to the ... "prudence of the state", rather he sought instead to demonstrate that the development of abstract Right was actually an ... "objective process", pp.125-6. Here Habermas' reading is undoubtedly more sensitive than many although even his thesis is not original since he largely follows Camus' interpretation, see *The Rebel*, Penguin, 1971, p103. Habermas says of Hegel's understanding of the revolution, see p123 he [Hegel sought] ... "to conceptually legitimise the revolutionising of reality without the Revolution itself". In his generalising sweep through Hegel's thought, Habermas recognises Hegel's understanding of the Revolution as a problem-solving exercise concerning the philosophical (i.e. theoretical), consolidation of Right, hence his constant referral to Hegel's later works. However, Habermas does not expand on the mutually-recognitive moment without restraint which so thoroughly disturbed Hegel and the latter man's celebrated ambivalence towards the Revolution.

²⁴⁶Again see Avineri, 1972, p184. Also see Charles Taylor, Cambridge, 1979, p103 & pp.118-25, closely follows Avineri's reading. In Taylor's account of Hegel's reading of the revolution, the root cause of social disorder and political excess during the thermidor is also a lack of liberal institutions, *avacuity* i.e. a lack of opposed, competing social and political institutions and processes. Absolute Freedom thus becomes quixotic since these, if set up, would ultimately stand against absolute freedom. In a more general sense I empathise with Solomon's disquiet on the nature of Taylor's reading of Hegel, Solomon, 1985, p6. Taylor takes Hegel to be an idealist: someone who believes that the absolute is everything in the Universe unfolding as a matter of rational necessity. Finally, see Rockmore, 1993, pp.52-3 for the *non plus-ultra* in reductionist accounts of Hegel's analysis of the Revolution.

²⁴⁷Also it is claimed that his famous phrase in the Preface of the *Philosophy of Right* that "What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational" is a philosophical justification of the status quo. For a repudiation of such a thesis see M.W. Jackson, "Hegel: The Real and the Actual", Yirmiahu Yovel, "Hegel's Dictum that the Rational is Actual and the Actual is Rational: Its Ontological Content and its Function in Discourse", and finally, E.L. Fackenheim, "On the Actuality of the Rational and the Rationality of the Actual", all in Stewart, 1996.

On the other hand, the final view, that Hegel was a moderate liberal who approved of the freedom and liberty of the Revolution but not the lawless violence, is now dominant within Hegel scholarship.²⁴⁸ It is also the reading which I favour in what follows, although I do not want to rehearse these arguments here I will just briefly mention the following by way of summary. The problem with the first reading, that of Hegel the socialist or anarchist, is that this idea simply does not square with Hegel's mature writings of reconciliation and one is therefore left defending the position that there were two Hegel's. Such personality 'splitting' seldom does justice to the ambiguous nature of the development of thought within any given individuals thought and quite often does do interpretative violence to the writings in question. Secondly, Hegel was certainly no utopian or normative thinker of the socialist variety and he clearly did not believe that society could somehow be created from a void or from the kind of clean slate provided by the Revolution. Such an interpretation does not square either with Hegel's historicism or his critique of Rousseau.²⁴⁹

In the case of the reading which looks to Hegel the conservative, the problem here is that this interpretation ultimately casts Hegel down as an implacable enemy of the very freedom, Absolute Freedom, which he always thought the most important dialectical product of the pre-Revolutionary consciousness. While Hegel may have harboured some fears as to the lack of equanimity possessed by the Enlightenment consciousness in reality, a condition which produced the Revolution, it is hardly likely that he was opposed to its most important product, that is, the social recognition of complete adult autonomy. Both Kant and Schiller, for example, and long before Hegel, had attempted to mount a liberal defence of the French Revolution. In a treatise on religion written in 1793 Kant countered the argument that the French were not ripe for freedom with the axiom that men only become ripe for freedom once they are set free.²⁵⁰ For the same reasons, the notion of Hegel the totalitarian is hardly worth considering here. More plausible then, is the reading of Hegel as the liberal critic of the excesses of the Revolution but as the upholder of its freedoms. The questions remains however; what kind of liberalism did he arrive at and why? And how should we read his attitude to the Revolution philosophically and theologically.

²⁴⁸ See J. Stewart, 1996, for example, for an accumulative defence of Hegel the liberal, and Wood, 1991.

²⁴⁹ Hegel, 1977, para 594.

²⁵⁰ I am paraphrasing from Wilkinson and Willoughby [Eds], in Schiller, 1982, pxviii, "Their first attempts will naturally be crude, even dangerous; but says Kant, "we must be free in order to learn how to use our powers wisely in freedom".

From the moment of its conception, the practical efficacy of the *Phenomenology* was always intimately integrated with the Absolute Freedom of the Revolution. Hegel's project or system, could only be differentiated from many of the others of the time if the end of alienation and the identity of self and object or of philosophy and the natural consciousness, which formed the culminating theme of his epistemological endeavour, was presupposed by the social recognition of that same revolution. In other words, the vantage point or 'birds eye view' of the 'absolute standpoint' is an integral product of the Revolution. If it is taken that Hegel's understanding of the Terror is one where that horror is seen to be the inevitable consequence of Absolute Freedom, then that freedom must also be retrogressively denounced in perpetuity. Thus this is one more reason for rejecting the notion of Hegel the conservative, because this is simply not what Hegel did in any of his writings.²⁵¹

The conservative interpretation culminates in a failure to take Hegel's thesis of "Absolute Knowing" seriously and on its own terms.²⁵² Rather, the social recognition of "Absolute Freedom" which the Revolution established, albeit briefly, amounts to nothing less than the Revelation²⁵³ of an irrevocable standard of judgement through which all human past and relations present and were to be examined and interpreted.²⁵⁴ However, the future can never be grasped by the understanding in the same manner as the past and the present; from the beginning of the 'closure' of "Absolute Knowing", the "circle of circles", everything is opened up to "negativity", this is why the ... "owl of Minerva", e.g. philosophy, is never able to plot the course of future events as it once did those of the past and present.

²⁵¹Thus Taylor, 1979, can say, ... "reason realises itself means that the outcome arises out of human action which is not really conscious of what it is doing, which acts while seeing through a glass very darkly, but which is guided by the cunning of reason", p123. Also see Rockmore, 1993, Philosophy, Hegel will say, is nothing other than the conceptual understanding of its own historical moment, p49.

²⁵²Typical of this sort of attitude is that of Albert Camus, who characterises Hegel's "End of History" as .. "blind romanticism", 1971, pp.177-8, although paradoxically, he states earlier in the same work that [Hegel placed] .. 'emphasis on the end of history. Until then there is no suitable criterion on which to base a judgement of value. One must act and live in terms of the future', p112. Also, note that the notion of the "End of History" is more than just a political concept, i.e. modern liberalism, as Fukuyama has suggested. If God is to be replaced by humanity (Absolute Knowledge), then humanity must have the same omnipotent qualities as God. Boethius pointed out in his Consolations of Philosophy (Bk V), that God must, by definition, be able to simultaneously see the beginning, the present and the end of man, in other words God must survey all of time. Leaving aside the controversy of an "End of History" thesis for the time being, clearly "Absolute Knowing" posits this same ability for a completely terrestrial Being, that is, the wise contemplative phenomenologist. Post-historical man is Godlike in that he/she is the master of his/her own destiny and is therefore, a master of time.

²⁵³If the word 'revelation' seems a little too strong or inappropriate then consider the comment made by Stepelevich, 1987, pps. 179 & 186. The term 'nakedness' was common currency among all the Young Hegelians, particularly with Marx and Bauer. They were undoubtedly picking up on a theme of 'exposure' which was present in the *Phenomenology* itself.

²⁵⁴Hegel, 1977, para 56, in other words, the speculative method of the *Phenomenology*.

Philosophy can only ...“paint its grey on grey”, it is only ever able to vindicate “Reason” cast in the past and present. While all events before the revolution were viewed through the murky depths of alienated consciousness, the non-alienated viewpoint supports the veracity of later notions such as the “cunning of reason”, when applied in this manner.²⁵⁵ In short, the “owl of Minerva” thesis, when torn from the *raison d'être* of the phenomenological enterprise and taken as an essentially conservative statement, does not retain much coherence, a point often made by Hegel’s ‘left’ Hegelian followers.²⁵⁶

But what kind of thing is social recognition in Hegel’s thought? One contemporary analytic scholar, Charles Taylor, takes the view that,

...Hegel was one of the profoundest critics of [the] notion of freedom as self-dependence. He laid bare its emptiness and its potential destructiveness with a truly remarkable insight and prescience. He has paradoxically helped both to bring this modern doctrine to its most extreme expression and to show the dilemma in which it involves us.

According to Taylor, Hegel throws out the baby of freedom with the bath water of nihilism. In other words, here Taylor correctly perceives that social recognition is empty of all meaningful content.²⁵⁷ It is what libertarian political theorists would call ‘negative freedom’, in that it posits the measure of personal freedom to be the extent to which an individual is free from all external constraints on their actions. Freedom is thus defined as freedom *from* everything coercive. Social recognition is the universal self-understanding of this autonomy of persons. In other words, such freedom simply defines the empty thought of what a person might well become, it does not describe what they are since it only minimally defines their possibilities not their actualities. Taylor’s claim that this is nihilistic is true (although his claim that Hegel held to this concept of freedom as an ideal is wrong), because such freedom does not posit anything of value such as truth, or the

²⁵⁵See Rockmore, 1993, p130, hence the common insistence in an irrevocable cleavage between the Hegel of the *Phenomenology* and of the *Philosophy of Right*, or indeed between the two halves of the *Phenomenology*.

²⁵⁶Hegel, 1977, para 5, the conservative thesis makes little sense when compared with Hegel’s ultimate goal, which he states clearly in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*. This point was made, though more obliquely, in Chapter I of the present work, the reader might like to recall that Hegel sought to replace “love of knowing” with “actual knowing”.

²⁵⁷See Taylor, 1979, p 167 and Wood, PR, CUP, 1991, pxi.

good and so on. However, as we shall see, Hegel was at least implicitly aware of this alleged "aporia" which is thrown out by the "centrifugal forces of the soul".²⁵⁸

On the other hand, it is perfectly legitimate to ask why Hegel was so critical of an event which he undoubtedly held to be the birth of modernity?²⁵⁹ While there is some excellent secondary scholarship on the subject of Hegel's reading of the Revolution many of these tend to miss the important and distinctly Hegelian point, that the Self-Consciousness which immediately precedes the *sunburst* of the Revolution itself is always likely to yield the more profound clues as to the meaning of that same event.²⁶⁰ In another context Hegel once said,

Great revolutions which strike the eye at a glance must have been preceded by a still and *secret revolution* in the spirit of the age, a revolution not visible to every eye, especially imperceptible to contemporaries, and as hard to discern as to describe in words. It is lack of acquaintance with this spiritual revolution which makes the resulting changes astonishing [my emphasis].²⁶¹

In the *Phenomenology* this ... "secret revolution" is caused by the Self-Consciousness of the modern nihilist, a consciousness which preceded the actual Revolution and it is to that Self-Consciousness that I shall now turn.

²⁵⁸ Thus Hegel's critique of this kind of freedom is also an anticipation of a critique of libertarian thinking more generally. Also see Kainz, pps. 83-91 who suggests that the transitional significance of the Terror and the post-revolutionary period is the thought of freedom and the subsequent recoil from emptiness, "it discovers in the negative quiet of the aftermath of destruction the positive necessity of substantial reality," says Kainz. Thus morality is a question of form, the movement from Catholic France to Protestant Germany, p91. According to this schema the last sections of the *Phenomenology* are the Protestant theology that underpins the *Philosophy of Right*. In another sense the Hegelian concept of God is radically transfigured, as Feuerbach demonstrated, thus the free will is not given by metaphysical notions of God such as in Descartes.

²⁶⁰ For an interesting exposition of the section "Absolute Freedom and Terror" see Gunn, 1988. While Gunn rightly points to an implicit awareness of the chaotic conception of individual liberty which lies at the root of Hegel's thought he mistakenly confuses this understanding on Hegel's part with an anarchism [at least in his analysis of what is important in Hegel]. In what follows I will attempt to demonstrate in passing that while Hegel might well have understood this he sought to preserve the promise of freedom and still accommodate the realities of the modern state. Thus it is not so much that the "system program" fragment, for example, should be rejected as the youthful scribbling of a young revolutionary, or adopted as a founding statement as Gunn would have it, see p65, rather, the question is one of how the state is to be made a mechanism of equality and fairness for all when the Self-Consciousness which produced it also simultaneously undermines such a project.

²⁶¹ ETW's, UPP, 1992, p 152.

In the French Philosophic writings, ...what is worthy of admiration is the astonishing energy and force of the Notion as directed against existence, against faith, against all the power of authority that had held sway for thousands of years.²⁶²

Hegel, *Jena Lectures* of 1805-6

II

The "Secret Revolutionary"

Some might think that Diderot's text *Le Neveu De Rameau* is outrageous when considered within its historical context. Diderot himself seems to have withheld it from publication, perhaps fearing that it would cause a scandal or a political backlash against the *Encyclopédie*.²⁶³ More mystery than fact surrounds this text. Why it was written? Why is there no reference to it in Diderot's voluminous correspondence? Was it an attempt to defend the *Encyclopédie*? Was it merely a warning shot in the musical wars between the French and Italian opera lovers of the period?²⁶⁴ What was Diderot trying to achieve and who were his targets, if any?

Though the purpose and transmission, loss and rediscovery of the manuscript is clouded in confusion and mystery,²⁶⁵ we do know from the dating of the first mention of the text, that Hegel was one of the first to see a copy of the *Nephew*. Hegel uses sections of the text no less than three times in the *Phenomenology*, [which was written in 1806].²⁶⁶ That Hegel uses three quotes from the *Nephew* is all the more remarkable once one considers that Aristotle, who is so highly esteemed by Hegel, is only mentioned twice by name, indeed Plato is also only mentioned twice and Kant once.²⁶⁷ In any case, it seems that only one year earlier [1805], a

²⁶²Hegel, 1995, Vol III, p384. For the approximate dating of these lectures see the Translators Note, Vol I, opening page. It is worth pointing out that this quote must be understood within a suitably ambiguous context (given the subject matter i.e. the revolution), this is entirely in keeping with Hegel's temper. On the negative side, he continues, "With the healthy human understanding and earnestness of spirit, and not with frivolous declamations, it has rebelled against the condition of the world as legally established, against the constitution of the state, the administration of Justice, the mode of government, political authority, and likewise against art". Hegel calls this .."barren content", p384.

²⁶³Diderot, 1966, see editors introduction, p11.

²⁶⁴Ibid, 1966, p35.

²⁶⁵Ibid, 1966, pps. 19-22.

²⁶⁶Hegel, 1977, paras 489, 522 & 545. Reclam, pp. 349, 370 & 386.

²⁶⁷Ibid, 1977, see index pp.593-4. Of course, in the case of Hegel's texts the frequency of a mention is seldom a reliable guide to the importance of a given thinker in Hegel's mind; although Kant is only mentioned by name once, he obviously figures highly in the *Phenomenology*. Never-the-less, by Hegel's own standards the use of three direct quotes from a Diderot text is obviously very significant.

copy of *Rameau's Nephew* found its way into Goethe's hands via Schiller where upon the former man is said to have produced a German translation before returning it to Schiller.²⁶⁸ Hegel was acquainted with Goethe so we must suppose that before this version of the manuscript was returned to Schiller, Hegel was given the opportunity to read it.²⁶⁹ Before we consider the specific use that Hegel makes of Diderot's text a few general comments on the nature of the text may do much to illuminate why Diderot was so uncharacteristically shy about publishing.

Rameau's Nephew is a work of consummate psychological, sociological and philosophical nihilism.²⁷⁰ Hyppolite and Price are correct in their characterisation of the *Nephew* as an example of a "deeply lacerated consciousness" but they do not go far enough in their explanation of the significance of this text for Hegel. Only sociological and philosophical nihilism will concern us here since psychological nihilism may be a personality trait of the *Nephew* but this is not enough in itself to constitute a moment of the *zeitgeist*. Diderot successfully portrayed an individual and an ethos, in one who believed in nothing, not even in himself and in so extreme a fashion and to such an extent that his own opinions and viewpoint were continuously self-contradicted and undermined.²⁷¹ The Nephew himself symbolises disorder, mayhem, madness and insanity (hence the opening epigram to section I of this chapter). On the other hand, from the opening line of the text which runs,

²⁶⁸Diderot, 1966, pps. 20-1, according to the editors introduction this copy probably came to Schiller via a German officer who had made a clandestine copy in St Petersburg. Presumably, the original source of this copy would have been from some of the original material which was left by Diderot to Catherine the Great of Russia.

²⁶⁹There is no mention anywhere of Hegel having made a copy of this for himself but we might reasonably suppose that he must have taken notes because Hegel is known to have taken notes on almost everything he read. Also the quotes from the *Nephew* are produced almost verbatim in the *Phenomenology* so are unlikely to have been reproduced from memory alone.

²⁷⁰Meaning, in accordance with the definitions used in the Introduction to this Chapter, that the Nephew is both a philosophical and ethical nihilist. That same nihilism has evidently produced an individual who is also a socio-pathological nihilist. However, this last categorisation will undoubtedly hold only if one considers the result of philosophical and ethical nihilism to be in some sense abnormal. Some may consider such cynicism a healthy critical distance from other members of society, as Nietzsche would no doubt contend. This latter assertion is controversial and beyond the scope of the present work. For the purposes of the present work, the most important point is that philosophical and ethical nihilism were identifiable rhetorical positions even during the early period under consideration.

²⁷¹See Diderot, p76, if the idea of Diderot as a precursor of Nietzsche seems a little far-fetched, where he says, "The man who must have a manual won't ever go far. Geniuses read little, but do a great deal and are their own creators." Particularly Nietzschean, is the theme of acts which are so evil that they have a certain aesthetic purity, this is most evident on p 97. There is also the notion that society could not function without "lies", see p 112. Also see Simon, 1995, where she argues that both Rousseau and Diderot anticipated the anxieties of mass culture and more recent trends. Finally, some distinction should be made between what Nietzsche thought to be the beginning of nihilism and Diderot's text. Nietzsche thought the Socratic project the beginning of nihilism. However, it could plausibly be argued that Socrates sought to humble man in the Cartesian and Humean sense of finding solid grounds for our knowledge, the ideas we hold to are often ill thought out. In the case of Socrates this was an ethical project rather than an epistemological one. Diderot's character, on the other hand, would seem to be the first real nihilist in the sense of one who deliberately sought to undermine all attempts to find either ethical or epistemological grounding, just for the sake of it.

Come rain or shine, my custom is to go for a stroll in the Palais-Royal every afternoon at about five,

We are left in no doubt that Diderot presents himself as a representative of predictable reliability; in short, as order personified.²⁷² Yet, in the Nephew, Diderot, the arch *philosophe* and defender of the faith of Reason and Enlightenment, left open to question such antithetical values as the nature of good and evil, madness and sanity, irrationality and reason, the ugly and the sublime.²⁷³ In addition, he questioned the value of education (given his polemical defence of education against Rousseau this is all the more remarkable), as well as literature, history, geography, art and indeed any other topic of substance.²⁷⁴

In broad strokes then, the meeting between Diderot and Jean-François Rameau is straightforward enough.²⁷⁵ While out walking Diderot bumps into Rameau who is in a condition of some agitation because he has just been released from his position of music teacher for telling his wealthy patrons what he really thought of them. While they, for their part, may have relished Rameau's entertaining and outrageous behaviour in most cases, he apparently went too far on one occasion and was subsequently dismissed. During the discussion which follows, which is by turns haphazard and meandering, bawdy and high-flown, the two men discuss politics, ethics, music, education and much else besides. Diderot, attempts to present in a reasoned manner the argument that the views of others must count for something, that money is important to happiness but no guarantee of the same, that education is of value and in short; he takes many of the positions one would expect from a man of the Enlightenment such as he. The Nephew however, will have none of this, and in what amounts to a masterpiece of modern cynicism he trashes each one of Diderot's somewhat commonplace stuffy airs and pretensions.

Jean-François Rameau is the stereotypical bohemian rag-a-muffin. In his opening biographical profile, Diderot described Jean-François in terms which leave us in no doubt that he thinks the latter a scoundrel, a wastrel and a good-for-nothing. What's more, this is a characterisation that the Nephew is all too willing to agree with. When Diderot, in complete exasperation, tells the nephew that he is ...“an idler, greedy”, cowardly and has ..“a soul of dirt”, the latter calmly replies

²⁷²Ibid, 1966, p33.

²⁷³Ibid, 1966, p83.

²⁷⁴Ibid, 1966, p57.

²⁷⁵J.F. Rameau was an actual character of the period, the Nephew of the great composer, Jean-Philippe Rameau.

that he had already conceded as much. Images of Rameau are of a man who is both aggressive and pathetic, he indulges in violent arm waving, dancing, singing, crying, indeed the whole panoply of behaviours that would attract the attention the police today. It would appear that Diderot wants us to consider whether such behaviour is actually madness or that passion which comes with the commitment to something greater.

In one passage it appears to the reader momentarily that Diderot, the *philosophe* himself, is in an ambiguous position, in offering some kind of justification for bringing us the Nephew, he says,

If one of them [a wastrel] appears in a company of people he is the speck of yeast that leavens the whole and restores to each of us a portion of our natural individuality. He stirs people up and gives them a shaking, makes them take sides, brings out the truth, shows who are really good and unmasks the villains. It is then that the wise man listens and sorts people out.²⁷⁶

Hegel undoubtedly recognised a familiar object here in that the Nephew could be seen as a development of the 'privileged standpoint' over against the Enlightenment, for it is by no means self-evident that Diderot, the wiser man, actually wins the arguments that are presented in the text? Often the weight of the argumentative balance seems to favour the Nephew and simply serves to make Diderot's literary experiment even more compelling.²⁷⁷ Indeed, in the opening page Diderot appears to undermine his own critical thinking, reducing it to the kind of vacuous cynicism he later devotes so much energy in finding a suitable refutation to, he says for example, "My ideas are my trollops". Why would a *philosophe* go to such lengths as to effectively undermine his own position, vis-à-vis Enlightenment assumptions? This then is the setting of the discussion and the puzzle of the text.

The content of the discussion is no less remarkable than the setting. The nephew takes the view that life is a waste of time because there is no ultimate purpose or meaning in the cosmos. For example he asserts over and over that there is no honour worth striving for, nor wealth nor beauty, therefore how each chooses to waste their time is a matter for them and them alone.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶Ibid, 1966, p35.

²⁷⁷Ibid, 1966, p81, "Sometimes I was astonished by the rightness of this clown's judgements about men and characters. I told him so".

²⁷⁸Ibid, 1966, pps.37, 38, 39 & 52,

The important thing is to evacuate the bowels easily, freely, pleasantly and copiously every evening.That is the final outcome of life in every sphere...

says the Nephew, with the profane irreverence which is his hallmark. His arguments are also often inconsistent, illogical and self-contradictory, for example; on the one hand he is contemptuous of mediocrity and on the other, he is equally contemptuous of genius, because the latter make poor citizens, fathers, mothers, brothers or friends.²⁷⁹

The Nephew not surprisingly, has even less time for the arts or philosophy.²⁸⁰ Throughout the dialogue the Nephew refers to the "I" of the narrative disparagingly as "Mr. Philosopher". In his view such types have nothing to offer life. Rather, he prefers the,

...wisdom of Solomon, ...drink good wine, blow yourself out with luscious food, have a tumble with lovely women, lie on soft beds. Apart from that all the rest is vanity.²⁸¹

While at first glance this might appear to amount to nothing more than mindless philistinism, a thoughtful reconstruction of Diderot's text suggests rather a more serious point: his arguments, as in the examples of his critique of the arts and education, have more in tune with the 'other' of Enlightenment Reason, in a depreciating nihilism which appears to anticipate the discourse of modernity which was to follow.²⁸² The Nephew does not take the view that art is worthless, the point is that art does not have access to truth claims of the kind which it is often claimed to have.²⁸³ More importantly, the last sentence of this quote demonstrates that the Nephew also took the view that society's structures were dependent upon a polyvalence of social recognition, a recognition which he viewed as little more than a

²⁷⁹Ibid, 1966, pps. 38 & 52.

²⁸⁰Ibid, 1966, p43.

²⁸¹Ibid, 1966, p65. In much the same vane the Nephew declares later that,"all down and outs are united in front of food", p84.

²⁸²See Hume, 1985, pxviii., much more eloquently, Hume once wrote, "When we see, that we have arrived at the utmost extent of human reason, we sit down contented; tho' we be perfectly satisfied in the main of our ignorance, and perceive that we can give no reason for our most general and refined principles, beside our experience of their reality; which is the reason of the mere vulgar, and what it required no study at first to have discovered for the most particular and most extraordinary phenomenon".

²⁸³Diderot, 1966, pp.57-8.

narcotic of dependency. "Apart from that all the rest is vanity",²⁸⁴ he says in a classic statement of modern nihilism, the idea here is quite simply that philosophy cannot provide reliable knowledge of any kind, neither meaning to human existence nor an ethical code which one might live by. Here was the Spirit of the Revolution against the Enlightenment encapsulated in a furtive and secret text, a text written by one of Enlightenment's most colourful and authoritative representatives.

²⁸⁴Ibid, 1966, p65, anticipating the much later debate between Strauss and Kojève, 1991, and on the side of Strauss, the Nephew takes the view that society consists of only ...tyrants and slaves. Similarly, the notion of altruism is simply reduced to a category of bad faith. These are strikingly modern observations.

The former [reasoners] however, will find in their very frankness a strain of reconciliation, will find in their subversive depths the *all powerful note* which restores Spirit to itself.²⁸⁵ [my emphasis]

Hegel, *The Phenomenology*

III

The "all powerful note"

On first glance Hegel's use of quotations from Diderot's text look quite superficial, employed only for effect.²⁸⁶ Indeed, the last quote (the "fallen idol quote") which is employed by Hegel may well lend some weight to this view because it is clear that it has been employed to provide flair and literary flourish.²⁸⁷ However, we shall return to this quote after some consideration of the important first and second quotations employed by Hegel. The first of these I shall call the "moral indoctrination" episode and the second the "manic" episode.

A brief glance at the structure of where these fall reveals that all three occur within the central section of the text entitled *Spirit*. Furthermore, both of these occur in the sub-section of Spirit which is entitled *Self-alienated Spirit. Culture*, and yet in the further division of this subject which is called *The World of Self-alienated Spirit, Culture and its realm of actuality*, the other corresponding section to this being *Faith and pure insight*.²⁸⁸ Although both quotes occur within the same section the second occurs much later, and the final quote with which we began occurs a remarkable forty pages later [in a completely different section entitled, *The struggle of the Enlightenment with Superstition*.²⁸⁹ The placing of the first two important quotes in the section *Culture and its realm of actuality*, as we shall see, is not without significance.

All the quotes, including the less important final quote, are used during the historiographically crucial phase of the most intense self-alienation. Furthermore, they are used during a discussion of pre-Enlightenment socio-political contradictions on the one hand, and on the other, during the important moment of reason's struggle with religion. While the decline of the medieval social and political structures were determined by the growing complexity of modern

²⁸⁵Hegel, 1977, para 522.

²⁸⁶Ibid, 1977, paras 489, 522 & 545. Reclam, pps. 349, 370 & 386.

²⁸⁷Ibid, 1977, para 545.

²⁸⁸Ibid, 1977, para 488.

²⁸⁹Ibid, 1977, paras 522 & 541.

power forms the actual direction taken by such societies was dependent upon *spiritual* elements. This is wholly consistent with Hegel's early thesis in his theological writings that a secret revolution of consciousness must precede the actual revolution.²⁹⁰

The opening passages of *Culture and its realm of actuality* consists of immensely abstract discussions concerning legal and political processes; essentially law and the basis of right.²⁹¹ While every citizen might appear to be recognised as such in pre-Enlightenment times this is clearly not the case,

This equality with everyone is, therefore, not the equality of the sphere of legal right, not that immediate recognition and validity of Self-Consciousness simply because it is....

This is the objective right which can only come with the social recognition of the revolution itself.²⁹² Then in a short but crucial passage Hegel wants to demonstrate that the necessary product of Roman law is the development of the "universal substance", i.e. the modern (but still absolutist) state. It is at this juncture that we arrive at the first use of material from Diderot's text. Those individuals who thrash about vainly trying to assert their "particularity" against the modern state are simply deluding themselves that they are special and unique, they are prematurely egotistical before a state which is still dominated by feudal structures.²⁹³

In asserting their "particularity" such individuals are rejecting culture and in so doing they are also rejecting the state and self-objectification as *Bildung*. This is, in Hegel's account, the same kind of reactionary romanticism, that is typical of Rousseau, where some notion of a corrupted natural man is employed to denote, ultimately, a corresponding rejection of civilisation. However, this romantic notion of individuality is far from esteemed by other members of the community and as such it is scorned by the more level headed members of society. The next important move in consciousness is not the retreat into some kind of harmony with nature but the radical new awareness of the ability to control and dominate nature. There can be little doubt that the type of individual Hegel has in mind here as a classical example of the immature consciousness is typified by Diderot's *Nephew*.

²⁹⁰Ibid, 1977, paras 484, 485 & 486.

²⁹¹Ibid, 1977, para 488.

²⁹²I have placed the word objective under inverted commas here to indicate that it is by no means clear what objective right means here.

²⁹³Ibid, 1977, para 489.

If we return to Diderot's text for a moment then, we see that in an appeal to the Nephew, the "I" [presumably Diderot himself], attempts to convince the bohemian that the morality of the many is always to be preferred, he then marshals as evidence in support of his contention the responsibilities of parenthood.²⁹⁴ However, the Nephew retorts that the result of such moral indoctrination is only likely to result in a confused child, the formation of whose mental condition would be torn between the norms of society and the immoral example of his own father. The Nephew further claims that the outcome is almost surely going to be the production of a ... "rogue" or a "mediocrity". It also transpires during the conversation that the Nephew would prefer to induce the former of these personality traits if possible.

Somewhat surprising is Hegel's use of this example in his own text because he appears to side with the "I" rather than with the Nephew. Surprising because one would expect that only a Self-Consciousness which decisively rejects social norms and values would be likely to produce the "bath of Revolution" in Hegel's thinking? However, Hegel's dialectical thought weaves a more subtle path because we see here that it is the existence of the opposition *per se* which is crucial. It is the tension between those who reject norms and values and those who passively and unthinkingly accept the same that throw up this particular text, *Rameau's Nephew*. Thus Diderot, like Socrates and Sophocles in an earlier age, bears witness to his own generation, his own developing 'privileged standpoint' perfectly captures the contradictions of the time. In doing so he demonstrates that each must construct and shape their collective world by definition and that there can be no refuge for individuals in notions of the natural.²⁹⁵ Hegel says at this point,

The process in which the individuality moulds itself by culture is, therefore, at the same time the development of it as the universal essence, i.e. the development of the actual world.

In the thought of the Nephew philosophical nihilism is the highest expression and the final product of alienation. On the one hand, for Hegel the Nephew is the symbolic representation of a one sided particularity but on the other the "I" of the narrative represents objective right, that is, represents adherence to the collective meanings embodied in the developing state formation of modernity.

²⁹⁴Diderot, 1966, p 108.

²⁹⁵Hegel, 1977, para 490.

Here Habermas is correct in his estimation of Hegel's ambiguous position. It is clear that for Hegel, celebrating the nihilism that created the revolution is not the same thing as whole heartedly celebrating nihilism *per se*.

In the second "manic" quote, the task of unpacking the significance of the example is more difficult because the entire episode is submerged within the context of an obscure musical debate.²⁹⁶ During the period in which Diderot composed the *Nephew* a debate raged as to the respective merits of French and Italian music. The Nephew, we are told, enjoys the music of the Italian maestro *Duni*, and in particular he admires the skill with which the composer is able to mimic the natural passions.²⁹⁷ Also, note the overlap of the theme of the natural here as in the first example. In any case, the Nephew makes it known that he is only able to admire the French composers of the day in so far as they are also able to do likewise. When Diderot or the "I" goads him into revealing his thoughts more generally on French music, he proclaims that ... "it's dull".²⁹⁸ Adding to his analysis that he does not like all Italian opera, especially that of Pergolisi, one of the so-called *Guerre des Bouffons*. This is the specific backdrop to the actual quote which is used by Hegel, a specificity which appears to defy intelligible notions of significance, yet use it he does.²⁹⁹

Cautious writers choose the form in which they present their ideas; this I assume, was true of both Diderot and Hegel.³⁰⁰ Thus a close reading will pay as much attention to the action which is taking place in a given text as to the meaning of that text. It is reasonable to assume that Hegel would have had the outlandish imagery described by Diderot in mind when he chose to pluck this quote for his own use. Thus, without working on this assumption it is easy to see why most commentators could easily bypass this second quote. This discussion of obscure matters concerning the course of the music of the period and the behaviour of the Nephew might appear irrelevant to the matter in hand, *Culture and its realm of actuality*. If however, we pay careful attention not only to the setting and the speeches of the characters in dialogue, but also to the action, then Hegel's use of this second quote appears quite significant.

Diderot tells us that during the course of this impassioned argument concerning the merits of the various operatic traditions, that the Nephew becomes

²⁹⁶Diderot, 1966, p102.

²⁹⁷Ibid, 1966, pp. 97 & 98.

²⁹⁸Ibid, 1966, p97.

²⁹⁹Hegel, 1977, para 522.

³⁰⁰Paraphrasing Gourevitch & Roth, 1991, px.

overly stimulated and quite appears to lose all contact with his sanity. He mixes up all the tunes into a cacophony of sound, he sarcastically lampoons French opera before going on to lampoon all music, including that which only a few moments earlier he had so vigorously defended. Indeed his mannerisms and gestures so alarm Diderot that he is surprised that the Nephew is not carted off to the local asylum.³⁰¹ The action is important here because Diderot becomes dispirited by the whole event.³⁰² Despite the force and cogency of the Nephew's arguments, his plea for a more naturalistic music, an interesting anticipation of Richard Wagner's Schopenhauerean romanticism, and his sophisticated rejection of reason as the preferred mode of building artistic expression, Diderot cannot take this man seriously because of the manner of his delivery. He said,

Did I admire? [the Nephew] Yes, I did. Was I touched with pity?
Yes, I was. But a tinge of ridicule ran through these sentiments and discoloured them.³⁰³

This episode is a perfect example of the kind of destructive judgement which questions everything, even itself, "Where the highest values devalue themselves". Hegel goes on to say that all of this is achieved in a language which is ... "clever and witty", indeed it is the complete ... "perversion" of every idea and every form of reality. Of such judgement Hegel said [and here we come to his specific use of the material],

This kind of talk is the madness of the musicianwho heaped up and mixed together thirty arias, Italian, French, tragic, comic, of every sort; now with a deep bass he descended into hell, then, contracting his throat, he rent the vaults of heaven with a falsetto tone, frantic and soothed, imperious and mocking, by turns.³⁰⁴

In other words, as in the first example where Hegel considered that modernity emerged from the tension between social conformity and "particularity", which in turn created the pre-requisite of state formation, in this example the break with autocratic state forms is foretold in the nihilist consciousness of the dispossessed bohemian ragamuffin. As Hegel said,

³⁰¹Diderot, 1966, pp. 102-3.

³⁰²Ibid. 1966, p26, it is also worth noting that this passage is even more significant in that, in terms of the views actually expressed by Diderot in his other writings, the roles are actually reversed here, Diderot preferring French music, see the Editors Introduction.

³⁰³Ibid, 1966, p103.

³⁰⁴Hegel, 1977, para 522.

...the demand for this dissolution [of reason] can only be directed to the Spirit of culture itself, in order that it return out of its confusion to itself as Spirit, and win for itself a still higher consciousness.³⁰⁵

This reading of the first two episodes is further supported by the more straightforward third one, the "fallen idol" quote.³⁰⁶ During the discussion entitled *The Struggle of the Enlightenment with superstition*, it is clear that Hegel has little sympathy for the official representatives of religious belief. He says,

The masses are the victims of the deception of a priesthood which, in its envious conceit, holds itself to be the sole possessor of insight and pursues its own selfish ends as well.³⁰⁷

In addition to this self-conceit the clergy are purveyors of a ... "tissue of superstitions, prejudices and errors". Hegel contends that the reason of the Enlightenment, like perfume, will diffuse amongst their falsehoods as it does in the ... "unresisting atmosphere". Then quoting from Diderot he says, ... "crash, bang and wallop" their world will come crashing about their heads like so many falling idols of old.³⁰⁸ Thus this final quote is perfectly consistent with the theme of the other two, the slow disintegration of the old order in the collective imagination before its actual disintegration.

To conclude this section, when we contextualize these quotations from Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, drawing on the discussion itself in the case of the first example and upon the dramatic activity in the second, we see that for Hegel, Diderot is the modern Sophocles. The text is the very epitome of the revolutionary consciousness, a fiery cocktail of rebellion. On the one hand it reflects the new self-awareness of the ability to build society afresh and it combines this same realisation with the elements of both irrational and rational irreverence before every power, astral or earthly. This new Self-Consciousness is manifest in the language of nihilism where nothing said has any value and everything said is contradictory, nothing more valuable than the assertions of a self-confessed liar and waster. Despite all this Hegel felt able to say,

³⁰⁵Ibid, 1977, para 524-5.

³⁰⁶Ibid, 1977, para 545.

³⁰⁷Ibid, 1977, para 542.

³⁰⁸Ibid, 1977, para 546.

In such talk [witty irreverence], this particular self, qua this pure self, determined neither by reality nor by thought, develops into a spiritual self that is of truly universal worth.³⁰⁹

This is the eve of the French Revolution in practice as *Culture and its realm of actuality*. The new universal individual of post-revolutionary life is quite different. Such an individual is one who withdraws from moral commentary or from asserting their particular value-judgements as if they could be universally applicable, but is still able to recognise their duty. Thus we are left with the following puzzle, the history of the 'privileged standpoint' is realised by Hegel and culminates in "Absolute Knowing", and the final closure of self-alienation is found in the destruction of one-sided Enlightenment by the return of speculative philosophy or freedom of mind and the "Absolute Freedom" of the Revolutionary moment. However, the nihilist attitude which is embodied in the Nephew can only lead to terror because it remains essentially destructive, empty, abstract and immature. The solution Hegel finds to this problem is to retain a conception of philosophy which is essentially retrospective. Hegel's prophetic 'privileged standpoint' remains *ex eventu*. For Hegel, the task of philosophy is the inwardizing of the 'absolute standpoint' and the practical realisation of abstract freedom ["an empirical matter" he says in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*], not the promise of redemption in some future social agency.

Finally, the "all-powerful note" which restores the course of spirit, according to Hegel, is a humbled conception of Reason which takes care only to manifest itself in a procedural form which does not contradict the modern depth subjectivity's of the new social agency of the Enlightenment. This remains a different conception of Reason than that of Kant's because this new humility of Reason posits no moral agenda of its own, neither that of self-government nor utilitarianism. It requires only the internalisation of the fundamental basis of the new procedural realm or form it inhabits.

³⁰⁹Ibid, 1977, para 526.

The German professors of constitutional law have not stopped spewing forth masses of writings on the concept of sovereignty and the meaning of the Acts of Confederation. [Meanwhile]. The great professor of constitutional law sits in Paris.³¹⁰

Hegel to Niethammer, Bamberg, August 29, 1807

IV

'Post-Historical' Existence

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Hegel's conception of freedom rejected the reductive positive notion of freedom understood as *possibilities* of action. Rather, he favoured the idea of freedom as a particular form of appropriate *action*.³¹¹ Here Allen Wood is correct when he says, Hegel describes freedom as,

"being with oneself in an other", that is, actively relating to something other than oneself in such a way that this other becomes integrated into one's own projects, completing and fulfilling them so that it counts as belonging to one's own action rather than standing over against it.

In other words, freedom requires the unity of subject and object, it demands the rational non-alienated appropriation of our own self-products. In short, Absolute Freedom is the closure of "thought which is hostile to itself". However, as we have also seen in this chapter, the closure of alienated dialectic understood as *Entfremdung* brings with it the additional responsibilities of a rationalised self-conception of *Entäußerung*. But the transition between the two forms of alienation remains problematic because the lesson of the "Terror" was the demonstration that social recognition remained 'abstract', that is, it remained a superficial exercise in freedom as universal arbitrariness and the rejection of social roles (The Nephew), and in the drawing up of abstract principles and formal documents re-stating a liberty which was wilfully disregarded by political factions. The purpose Hegel now sets himself is to demonstrate in the present how social recognition can be truly internalised in order that the empirical details might be made manifest in a rational *Entäußerung*.

³¹⁰Hegel, 1984, pp.139-141.

³¹¹ See Wood, introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, 1991, pxi.

The most common misunderstanding regarding Hegel's political theory has been one which is often found in both Marxist and Liberal readings: namely, that he held that a,

...political community is defined by a number of common goals [thus values] that are logically prior to those of its members.³¹²

In very general terms it may well be argued that the validity of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is interdependent on some basic adherence by members of the political community to a very broad range of basic assumptions. On the other hand, this is a very long way from notions of the modern state as some form of preconceived metaphysical entity.³¹³ In short, Hegel's response to modern nihilism, with its concomitant value neutrality, was to develop in response, a system of institutional structures which would, in turn, constantly preserve [*Aufheben*] social recognition's 'privileged' moment. In one sense, social recognition is certainly compatible with the traditional liberal notion of a means-indentured morality which is located in the self-worth of each individual, regardless of the ends of man.³¹⁴ However, as Hegel well understood, this does not necessarily entail that social recognition is in itself a value, rather, following the *sensus communis* of the Scottish school, Hegel held that social recognition was an epistemological as well as an ontological phenomenon.³¹⁵ The fact that value might be inclusive to social recognition, in so far as it is of some benefit to the individual unalienated psyche for example, is nothing other than a coincidence of sorts. The *Phenomenology*, as Flay has pointed out, is a work of traditional philosophy in this sense at least; there is a desire on Hegel's part "to get at the truth", to lay aside "love of knowing and become actual knowing".

To be sure, Hegel was not a proponent of political or philosophical nihilism, for Hegel, as we have seen, identified the human good with the self-actualisation of

³¹²See Belamy, 1987, p693, also, this is a position which is taken by Kant and which Hegel is, above all, trying to critique.

³¹³Ibid, 1987, p698, in an interesting analogy with the operation of language, Richard Bellamy has suggested that in Hegel's political theory the community stands in relation to the individual in much the same way as the rules of language relate to speech. Whilst vocabulary and grammar do not determine what we think and say, they do structure it.

³¹⁴See Kant, 1992, pp.93-130, for a classical statement of this kind of liberalism. However, unlike Hegel, Kant takes the view that such liberalism is rooted in a moral autonomy which is given, rather than the product of recognitive processes. Thus in the final analysis Kant's liberalism is ahistorical and of a kind which Hegel is concerned to transcend.

³¹⁵See Hegel, 1995, p372.

the Spirit. 'This is also clear from the closing paragraph of the *Phenomenology*, he said there,

...the two together (phenomenology and appearance), comprehended History, form alike the inwardizing and the Calvary of absolute spirit, the actuality, truth, and certainty of his throne, without which he would be lifeless and alone.

And then in his famous adaptation of Schiller's *Die Freundschaft*, we have Hegel's optimistic conclusion that,

....from the chalice of this realm of spirits foams forth for Him his own infinitude.³¹⁶

While this notion of "Absolute Knowing" in the *Phenomenology* may, by turns, be read as an existential theory, a psychological metaphor, a system of philosophy and even as a theological imperative, it is not explicitly political. It is little more than a sketch of the later "Absolute Idea" but it is also something different from the "Absolute Idea", in so far as "Absolute Knowing" represents the 'privileged standpoint' of the know-er and the *Idea* is that which he knows. However, as we saw in Chapter 1, Hegel was not particularly happy with the form of his presentation of "Absolute Knowing". Quite clearly his philosophical sketch at the end of the *Phenomenology* had none of the coherence or comprehensiveness of a fully worked-out political or ethical system and should not be extrapolated as such. But while Hegel held that this existentialist notion, whether theological or not, to be a good, this does not mean that he was naive enough to believe that in complex societies such existentialism was self-advancing. As we have seen, the theory of Absolute Freedom itself undermines this very same doctrine of self-actualisation. For Hegel, nihilism was the product of the search for truth and freedom and once the latter was revealed as empty of positive content then objective notions of truth would be the first casualty. Freedom in this sense, will only serve to undermine itself, only after social recognition becomes subjectively internalised by every individual can freedom be sustained and take its proper form, Hegel says,

...absolute freedom leave[s] its self-destroying reality and pass[s] into another land of self-conscious spirit where, in this unreal world, freedom has the value of truth.³¹⁷

³¹⁶Hegel, 1977, para 808.

It is not the intention here to follow the well-trodden path of so many others and offer another interpretation of Hegel's political philosophy. Neither is there space here for such a thing. Rather, the point is to underscore the way in which the assumption of nihilism shaped this theory, both in the *Phenomenology* and in the *Philosophy of Right*. Hegel's solution to the political dangers of value neutrality and moral relativism was an attempt to map out the most promising social institutions of self-understandings and self-mediations. This much is self-evident from even the most cursory glance over the index to the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* with its mediations of singular, particular and universal. However, if the argument of the present thesis is sound then Hegel must be found to be demonstratively addressing the problem of how one constructs institutions of self-mediation which are *posteriori*. That is, our institutions must be based on our ever-changing experiences of the real world, and not upon our knowledge, so-called, of transcendent values which are given to cognition or are *a priori*.

In both Hegel's early and mature thought, inter-subjectivity and communal forms of self-understanding may frame our interests but there is nothing which suggests that all or even most of these self-understandings are determined by society or the bonds of community. For Hegel, the post-historical "shape" of the world demands that our institutions necessarily appear before our values, not the other way round, as is most commonly held in political philosophy. In the *Phenomenology* he was to say,

...spiritual essence has already been designated as ethical substance; [that is, the state] but spirit is the actuality of that substance.

He continued,

Spirit, being the substance and the universal, self-identical, and abiding essence, is the unmoved solid ground and starting point for the action of all....³¹⁸

In the much later *Philosophy of Right* he said,

³¹⁷Ibid, 1977, para 595.

³¹⁸Ibid, 1977, para 439.

....it is only through being a member of the state that the individual [individuum] himself has objectivity, truth, and ethical life.

On the other hand, in the same passage a little further on he also goes on to describe the state as ...“the march of God in the world”, ... a phrase which has undoubtedly led some to speculate in favour of the view we are trying to refute here, namely; that Hegel's account of the state remains, in some sense, metaphysical or transcendental.³¹⁹ However, we also know that for Hegel, the march of God was also analogous with the march of Napoleon himself ...“this world spirit on horseback”, and literally, in the further march of the Napoleonic Code across a still backward and almost feudal Germany.³²⁰ The *Phenomenology* in effect, was the Self-Consciousness of the Napoleonic Code. In the final paragraph of the chapter on post-historical morality Hegel said,

...it [satisfied Being] is God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge.³²¹

As Kojève as argued, on the one side is Napoleon and on the other is Hegel,

Consequently, they are these sheer opposites for one another; it is the completely inner being which thus confronts its own self and enters into outer existence.

Kojève is surely correct in his view that the identity of these “opposites for one another” is Hegel and Napoleon, in-so-far as the latter represents the Entäußerung of the ‘absolute standpoint’ writ large. Thus while many have argued that Hegel notoriously sought the rational justification for the thesis that might is right, such scholars have failed to see that for Hegel, Napoleon was a unique case. Napoleon's basic law was the maturation of the spirit of the modern state. Once these universal institutions of the modern state, such as those of education and the other institutions of civil society, the corporations and some form of representative democracy was in place, then new philosophical criteria would apply in the analysis of political projects.

The anarchy of the French Revolution shook Hegel badly, even in the much later *Philosophy of Right*, concern with what went wrong was always uppermost in

³¹⁹Hegel, 1991, 258a.

³²⁰Hegel, 1984, letter No's 71, 73, 74, & 95.

³²¹Hegel, 1977, para 671, also see Kojève, 1989, p 69.

his political imagination. Could the promise of the freedom of the revolution be preserved, without the empty destruction and violation of the dialectic which produced it, be saved? How could the social fluidity of the "spiritual masses", which had abolished all institutions, be reconciled with the new institutions of post-historical life? In fact, Hegel's point is quite simply that reconciled they must become for modernity's lesson is that they have no choice, there can be no real going back. In the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* he said,

If the will determines itself in this way, [in the anarchist sense of freedom as arbitrariness] or if representational thought [die Vorstellung] considers this aspect in itself [für sich] as freedom and holds fast to it, this is negative freedom or the freedom of the understanding. This is the freedom of the void, which is raised to the status of an actual shape and passion. If it remains purely theoretical, it becomes in the religious realm the Hindu fanaticism of pure contemplation; but if it turns to actuality, it becomes in the realm of both politics and religion, the fanaticism of destruction, demolishing the whole existing social order, eliminating all individuals regarded as suspect by a given order, and annihilating any organisation which attempts to rise up anew.³²²

In other words, there can be no going back to the beginning or the middle of the dialectic. Using language which had been lifted straight from his own *Phenomenology* he continued,

....and its [freedom] actualisation can only be the fury of destruction.³²³

Hegel is quite clear that the 'particularity' of absolute freedom will in the end cancel itself out if it is not mediated by social institutions such as those which emerge as rational in the present, thus in the *Philosophy of Right* he warns that,

...the people, during the French Revolution, destroyed once more the institutions they themselves created, because all institutions are incompatible with the abstract Self-Consciousness of equality.³²⁴

³²²Hegel, 1967, 5 Remark.

³²³Hegel, 1977, para 589.

³²⁴Hegel, 1967, 5 Remark.

The spiritual sansculottism of the revolution had to be replaced by "actual" sansculottism, this was the task of the Code, the actualisation of freedom without the empty negativity of the social recognition of the Revolution.³²⁵

The underlying rationale of Hegel's political philosophy can thus be summed up as follows: the post-historical conception of freedom is one which does not regard possibilities of action or the shallow venting of one's peculiarities, as in the case of the *Nephew*, as substantive freedom but only as a theoretical freedom.³²⁶ While such a subjective viewpoint is a spiritual prerequisite of modernity, it is not the mature way. The modern state and the other major constitutional embodiments of modernity suggest rather, that freedom is best realised when one actively relates one's own projects with these social structures. When one's own life plans are integrated with such institutions to the extent that they are viewed as one's own rather than as something which, in Hegelian language, stands over against one.³²⁷ The fact that this idea depends upon the ability of individuals to act rationally to the extent that they are able to identify with the sum total which is greater than themselves, is some thing else again and is not a proposition which can be adequately dealt with here.

According to Hegel then, institutions which are properly constructed around the basis of social recognition [that is, are universal] may enable us to further our infinitely differentiated projects if these are able to provide multiple levels of communication both horizontally and hierarchically, and if these are also able to freely disseminate information and knowledge to those who require it, but all of this is only realisable if actual political and social power is also widely disseminated throughout society. This is why we find through-out the *Philosophy of Right* a concern that power should not become concentrated into fewer and fewer hands.³²⁸

In any case, the identification with these institutions, especially the modern state, requires, at the very least, the ability to rationally project, assimilate and harmonise with an infinitely more complex social organism.³²⁹ Thus it falls upon the individuals of a post-historical society to responsibly submit to the inevitable compromises that such a state would have to make. Thus we see that in such a

³²⁵Hegel, 1977, Editors Introduction, pxxiv.

³²⁶Again, here I follow both Wood and Bellamy.

³²⁷See Hegel, 1967, 15R, 23. Hegel, 1990, 328a and 385. And Hegel, 1977, para 584.

³²⁸Hegel, 1967, para 244, one example of this is Hegel's concern that the creation of a rabble is likely to lead to its opposite, the concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands.

³²⁹Hegel, 1977, paras 419 & 437.

scheme it is the individuals who are shaping themselves and their values, to some extent, to the more complex demands of the rational state and the other institutions of modernity and not the other way around.

Finally, Hegel always stubbornly refuses to engage in anything other than *ex eventu* prophecy. Thus within the context of a discussion of the “Old World” and the “New”, he says in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*,

...prophecy is not the business of the philosopher. In history, we are concerned with what has been and what is; in philosophy, however, we are concerned not with what belongs exclusively to the past or to the future, but with that which is, both now and eternally---in short, with reason.³³⁰

³³⁰ Hegel, 1987, p171.

You know also that I always had a penchant for politics.³³¹

Hegel to von Knebel, Bamberg, August 30, 1807

V

Political Theory and *Ex Eventu* Prophecy

It is not my intention here to explore Hegel's political theory in any great detail, however, the important point is that in the course of Hegel's long spiritual glance backwards he identifies all the most important modern institutions of modernity, the growth and expansion of the modern state, the growth of constitutional law, the balance of power between the Monarch, the elected assemblies, the judiciary and the state bureaucracy, the states monopoly of legitimate violence and the role of international law.³³² Not one of these elements of government is less important today than it was in Hegel's own time. Hegel also describes in detail the development of civil society, the property relation, the modern family, the marriage contract, the system of needs and in his view the proper function of welfare. All of this can be ascertained by even the most momentary and superficial glance at the table of contents of his *Philosophy of Right*, which amounts to nothing less than a comprehensive compendium of observations on modern state and society.

More important than the precise detail of Hegel's description of political modernity then, its accuracy or validity, from the point of view of the present thesis, is the epigraphic rational Hegel himself gives in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* for why he sought only to identify Reason in the present. "To comprehend *what is* is the task of philosophy, for *what is* is reason", he says. As far as his treatment of political science is concerned and as a "philosophical" composition, his text he says ... "must distance itself as far as possible from the obligation to construct *a state as it ought to be*; such instruction as it may contain cannot be aimed at instructing the state on how it ought to be, but rather at showing how the state, as the ethical universe, should be recognised".³³³ I have already discussed the so-called left critique that has suggested that this apparent political pragmatism on Hegel's part, was an attempt to curry favour with the Prussian authorities and so will not repeat it here, except to remind the reader that Hegel's positions in the

³³¹ Hegel, 1984.

³³² See Hegel, 1991, p343, "The constitution is essentially a system of mediation".

³³³ Hegel, 1991, p21.

Philosophy of Right were certainly not a description of Prussian hegemony in any real sense.

The great challenge of the times, suggests Hegel over and over in the *Philosophy of Right*, is to find an intellectual or cognitive grounding for reconciliation with the social atomism of modernity, social atomism which threatens to create ...“a formless mass whose movement and activity can consequently only be elemental, irrational, barbarous and terrifying”.³³⁴ Again, let me repeat, the social anarchy of the Revolution and the vulgar utilitarianism of Enlightenment rationality, when one-sidedly developed in the sphere of the modern market economy, are the fundamental basis of nihilism and Revolutionary freedom in this account. Thus, Hegel took the view that social atomicity and the self-serving individualism of bourgeois culture was causing the disintegration, of what we today would call trade associations, and was therefore, driving trade interests towards internal competition and collapse.³³⁵ According to Hegel the modern market economy was both a blessing and a curse, it displayed the “inner necessity” that underlay a deeper social membership but it also contained a counter-tendency in so far as it also threatened to create a *homo economicus*.³³⁶

In other words, there is a profound political dilemma at the root of all of this. On the one hand, Hegel needs to produce, if he is to demonstrate how externalisation [Entäußerung] can be rationally dispatched in the service of meaning to overcome strangeness and isolation [Entfremdung], a self-disclosing and deep seated social subjectivity which is able to self-identify with the bigger picture.³³⁷ On the other hand, the social atomism itself would seem to preclude such an attempt on the part of externalisation. In a decidedly modern nightmare, nihilism, the absence of meaning, prevents the overcoming of strangeness [Entfremdung] and the necessary rational for suffering and struggle is lost in the first instance.

Hegel's escape from this paradox is in keeping with his religious formulation of the same problem, one which I have already examined, it is eschatological, but it is an eschatology which is clearly *ex eventu*. Returning to the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, we find Hegel toying with Rosicrucianist imagery.

³³⁴ Ibid, 1991, p344.

³³⁵ Ibid, 1991, p 455, where he says, ...“the spirit of atomicity, [is causing] the corporations to fall to pieces”.

³³⁶ Ibid, 1991, pps 227-29 and Editors introduction, I am paraphrasing Wood here.

³³⁷ See Norman, 1976, p103. “The French Revolution, then, is seen by Hegel as the overcoming of alienation”....in other words through the self-recognition that the work of the Revolution is our work etc.

If some of his more demagogic colleagues such as Jacob Friedrich Fries (1773-1843) had cast philosophy in the agitational role of crowd pleasing at the nationalist book-burnings of the Wartburg Festival of October 1817, then Hegel will recast it in the mould of agitation's opposite, in carefully crafted Reason.³³⁸ The appropriate role of political philosophy he says, is to encourage the recognition of ...“reason as the rose in the cross of the present”. In other words, the present is the earthly and its sufferings and alienation's [understood as both *Entfremdung* and as *Entäußerung*], and the rose is the divine, the Absolute Idea comprehending itself.

In Hegel's view, the process of social recognition, that is, the modern institutional manifestations of social recognition outlined a moment ago, *must socialise*, these must teach people how to mediate between Reason and suffering. The ultimate meaning and purpose of suffering must be revealed if spirit is to understand the success which is already Reason's own in the provident ascendancy of these social and political institutions and in the face of sufferings continuation, albeit even if the latter is a progressively diminishing phenomenon. “God does not wish to have narrow-minded and empty-headed children. On the contrary, he demands that we should know him;”..., says Hegel. What God's children should know, in Hegel's view, is that their belief in his “providence” is fully justified cognitively, and is finally revealed retrospectively in a spiritually loaded history of the world. Philosophy, unlike religion, is able, according to Hegel, to unearth Reason amid suffering in a detailed way.³³⁹ Philosophy must be its own time apprehended in thought, as he said in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*.

To summarise so far, I have demonstrated in this concluding chapter on Hegel that he took the view that the Enlightenment project was an inevitable product of philosophy's search for truth but that it was also a fatally flawed product in so far as it led to the one sided development of the individual. This unhealthy psychosis was brilliantly personified in Diderot's character sketch in *Rameau's Nephew*. While it may be true that the *Nephew* was paradoxically, both alienated and a nihilist, it was the nihilism which interested Hegel. The Absolute Freedom of the Revolution was a necessary product of the Enlightenment because the rational

³³⁸ Ibid, 1991, pps 384-86, for a full description of this event and Hegel's reaction to it.

³³⁹ See Hegel, in Bubner, 1997, p336, “It is one of the central doctrines of Christianity that providence has ruled and continues to rule the world, and that everything that happens in the world is determined by and commensurate with the divine government. This doctrine is opposed both to the idea of chance and to that of limited ends.... Its end is the ultimate and universal end which exists in and for itself. Religion does not go beyond this general representation; it remains on the level of generality. But we must proceed from this general faith firstly to philosophy and then to the philosophy of world history- from the faith that world history is a product of eternal reason, and that it is reason which has determined all its great revolutions”.

critique of all the previous modes of superstition and prejudice inevitably undermined that same critique. The blood bath of the Revolution was always present as a *possibility*, this was the dark side of the Enlightenment. Diderot's characterisation of the witty sophistication of the salons of Paris, now suggested different imagery in Hegel's historical imagination, rather suggesting the emptiness of the guillotine, only this time as socio-pathology. As such, the salons of polite society were dark recesses of human consciousness indeed.

A term such as nihilism is notoriously slippery, so much so that both traditional rationalist and analytic approaches have often regarded it to be of very limited value, if any value at all. However, we have seen in this chapter that the generalising historical power of such a term allows us to reach a deeper level of understanding concerning the connection between Hegel's political philosophy and his political theory.³⁴⁰ Liberal institutions, the rule of law, elected assemblies, corporations, and the organisations of civil society such as a free press, which I haven't mentioned, are means rather than political ends. In other words, these are value-neutral institutions which match a value-neutral world. Hegel's prophetic "Absolute Knowing" or completion of history refuses to look forward but remains *ex eventu*, legitimated by the past historically and the eternal philosophically, not held a hostage to fortune in some distant future scenario. This is not so in the case of the influential thinkers which fill the remainder of this study, Max Stirner, Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche and in what follows I shall explain why.

³⁴⁰This is necessary, of course, because of the ambiguity of the text itself.

As long as you believe in the truth, you do not believe in yourself,
and you are a- *servant*, a- *religious* man.

Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*³⁴¹

CHAPTER III

Post-Historical Existence I: The *Lumpenproletariat*

Introduction

In what follows I will argue that Max Stirner was an anarchist and a kind of nihilist. I will try to demonstrate how this anarchism and nihilism flowed from his reading of Hegelianism and from his political critique of some of the dominant views of other Young Hegelian's, principally those of Ludwig Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer. I will hold that Stirner sought to irrevocably transform society and that the purpose of this social transformation was to bring about a new social order which was in turn based upon a new conception of individualism. Finally, I hope to demonstrate the extent to which Stirner's political critique was a hostage to eschatological fortune, in other words, the full extent to which his anarchism was determined by the nihilism of the period.³⁴²

In section one I will outline some of the basic ideas of the Hegelian's, Feuerbach and Bauer, who provided the polemical stimulus to Stirner's book, *The Ego and Its Own*. In section two I will look at some of Stirner's most important ideas such as his notion of the "Egoist" and some of the secondary scholarship which has characterised Stirner as, among other things, an existentialist. Then in section

³⁴¹ Stirner, 1995, p312. Max Stirner, whose real name was Johann Casper Schmidt [1806-56], was perhaps one of the most remarkable of all the Young Hegelians. One of the few in this group to actually hear Hegel lecture at Berlin University, he rejected the life of productive radicalism which many of the others chose in favour of a kind of slothful independence. He only ever wrote one substantial volume, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, the publication of which gave him sufficient confidence in his future that he abandoned his position of schoolteacher at a local school for young ladies. *Der Einzige* did bring him a brief period of fame and notoriety before he virtually all but disappeared from the literary scene. Eventually he sank into poverty, the debtors prison, divorce and an early death after being stung by an insect. His one apparent act of affirmation following the publication of *The Ego and Its Own* being his attempt to set up a milk delivery service with his wives inheritance. In the event he lost all of Marie Dähnhardt's money and when Stirner's biographer caught up with her many years later, the story goes that all she would say regarding her "very sly" first husband was that she had never loved him nor enjoyed what she regarded as a real marriage with him.

³⁴² See Schmidt, 1998, p19, where he says of Hegel's view of the Revolutionary violence, "The Terror thus enters the pages of the Phenomenology as one more example of the fruitless effort to master objectivity by killing it". What was true of Hegel's view of the Revolution is even more true of Stirner's political philosophy, as I shall try to demonstrate in what follows.

three I will examine the extent of Stirner's messianism and finally in section four I will draw some of this together in a characterisation of Stirner's anarchist politics and nihilist rendering of Hegelianism which was to prove to be decisive for the future direction of German philosophy. For as Karl Löwith has suggested, the German obsession with nihilism, meaning Nietzsche and the post-Nietzscheans above all, began with Stirner's own understanding of Hegelianism.

Against Feuerbach and Bauer

Stirner's study of the contemporary thought of his colleagues opens with a challenge; to re-examine the concept of 'man' developed in the thought of Feuerbach and Bauer,

'Man is to man the supreme being', says Feuerbach.

'Man has just been discovered', says Bruno Bauer.

And Stirner replies,

Now let us take a more careful look at this supreme being and this new discovery.

Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (1804-72), studied philosophy with Hegel at Berlin University for two years. In a letter to Hegel dated 1828, Feuerbach gave Hegel the credit for his own religious eschatology. For Feuerbach, again moving beyond Hegel, the perfectibility of the kingdom wholly consists in the free operation of Reason itself. He wrote that he hoped that Hegel's system would,

...become the expressed universal spirit of reality itself, to found, as it were, a new world-epoch, to establish a kingdom....There is now a new basis of things,

he continues,

....a new history, a second creation, where.....reason will become the universal appearance of things.³⁴³

The messianic tone is a typical part of the legacy of Hegel's system. As Lawrence Stepelevich has pointed out, it was well understood from the very beginning of the Young Hegelian movement that this, ..."apocalyptic tone, this sense of historical revolution, was the essential ingredient of the Young Hegelian

³⁴³Quoted in L.S. Stepelevich. 1987, p5.

metaphysic".³⁴⁴ Most of Feuerbach's work was in some sense a critique of contemporary religious thought, from his *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* [1830], through to the book which brought him fame, his *The Essence of Christianity* [1841] to his later work, *On the Essence of Faith in Luther's Sense* [1844]. In his *Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy* [1839], Feuerbach continually pressed the fact that he thought a new day had dawned,

German speculative philosophy [i.e. Hegel] stands in direct contrast to the ancient Solomonic wisdom: whereas the latter believes that there is nothing new under the sun, the former sees nothing that is not new under the sun.³⁴⁵

Feuerbach, typically, considered Hegel's philosophy the revealed truth; this truth was contained in the thesis that the *Phenomenology* had essentially retained the content of Christianity but in keeping with Hegel's treatment this form is now one of the 'idea' and the 'concept' together rather than the pictorial imagery of the scriptures. The retention, therefore, of the liturgical and other practices of Western religion was, according to Feuerbach, an historical anachronism and the last dying gasp of self-alienated consciousness. A condition in which humanities most elevated feelings, aspirations, thoughts and hopes become attributes of God rather than the self-products of men. While religion usefully served to remind man that the universe and nature is a unified system or his own essence, Feuerbach's radical religious anthropology sought to construct a new secular humanism which was based, ultimately, on the love and understanding of fellow man, thus bypassing the need for any form of traditional religious mediation.³⁴⁶ In short, he sought to de-theologise Hegel's system.

An example of Feuerbach's critique of religious belief, taken from his magnum opus, *The Essence of Christianity* should serve to demonstrate his method. In chapter twenty-one, entitled "The Contradiction in the Revelation of God" Feuerbach turns to traditional ontology. He points out that ultimately, proof of God's existence must fall upon the belief in revelation since "proofs drawn from reason" for the existence of God are "merely subjective". This is because "A God who only exists without revealing himself, who exists for me through my own mental act, such a God is merely abstract, imaginary",...³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴Ibid, 1987, p5.

³⁴⁵Ibid, 1987, p95.

³⁴⁶Here I am paraphrasing M. Inwood, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 1995, p276.

³⁴⁷Feuerbach, 1989, p204.

However, a God who “gives knowledge of himself through his acts alone” is thought to be “objective”, says Feuerbach. Furthermore, a theological objectivity of this kind, which is “in itself a mere theory” actually becomes to the religious mind a “practical belief, a matter of conscience,- a fact”. And crucially, a “fact is that which one must believe *nolens volens*;³⁴⁸ a fact is a physical force not an argument”...³⁴⁹ Thus through this process the religious mind becomes the passive being and God becomes omnipotent self-activity. But, asks Feuerbach, why does God, “who needs nothing”, invest in man, why is the revelation directed towards man at all? It is, after all, man who determines the need for this active God, as God does also of man, both man and God are reciprocally determined in this arrangement but, says Feuerbach, “in revelation man determines himself as that which determines God, i.e. revelation is simply the self-determination of man, only that between himself the determined, and himself the determining, he interposes an object-God”.³⁵⁰

Finally, that which must come from God to man, “comes to man only from *man* in God”, from the “ideal nature of man to the phenomenal man, from the species to the individual”. Feuerbach concludes that in revelation what actually occurs is that “man goes out of himself, in order ... to return to himself”. Thus “theology is nothing less than anthropology”, meaning that knowledge of God is actually nothing other than “knowledge of man”, the species-being historically understood. In Feuerbach's view each presentation of God is actually the idealised collective expression of the nature of man to other men, hence his admiration for Hegel's historical elevation of reason.

Now we have a fuller appreciation of the opening quote by Feuerbach with which Stirner opens *Der Einzige*, “Man is to man the supreme being”, this epigram should be understood literally. However, Stirner cannot accept the notion of a generic “supreme being”, rather, as we shall see, the one “supreme being” that he is prepared to accept is the revealed Ego, but this is to anticipate my exposition.

Feuerbach's analysis does fall short of Hegel's system in at least two respects. First, unlike Hegel, Feuerbach does little to demonstrate that his ontological thought, principally the value of reciprocity understood in species terms as generic mankind, should not just be considered as one more “kind” or “type”

³⁴⁸*The New College Latin & English Dictionary* gives “unquestioningly”.

³⁴⁹Feuerbach, 1989, p205.

³⁵⁰Ibid, 1989, p206.

[thinking here of Hegel's critique of the Nephew], of life. Hegel had at least tried to demonstrate how his *Phenomenology* was the "true" in terms which were cognisant of the history of philosophy i.e. the dove-tailing of epistemology and freedom with something eternal, i.e. the "Absolute Idea". To some degree we are expected to assume that this is also Feuerbach's Hegelian starting point but perhaps this was unlikely to be convincing for Stirner. Secondly, as we saw with regard to Hegel's conception of the historical absolute or 'privileged standpoint', Hegel held that the duty of philosophy was to think in the past and present, since that which was deemed providential could only be retrospectively deduced. Thus the true moral Spirit of "self-certainty" in Hegel's view is not based upon love of man but on conscience, which is here another term for the subjectification of social recognition, although in this case it is freedom, the French Revolution internalised.

A late convert to left Hegelianism, Bruno Bauer (1809-82), like Feuerbach and Stirner was one of the Young Hegelian's who actually attended Hegel's lectures, though in the case of Bauer, principally those on religion. In his first major study of Hegelianism, which was written anonymously, *The Trumpet of the Last Judgement over Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist* (1841), Bauer adopted the bombastic position of an outraged Christian. The tone throughout this work is even more apocalyptic than Feuerbach's. Indeed, the themes of nakedness, exposure and revelation are some of the most enduring of the entire piece, something which is also noted by a recent English translator of *The Trumpet*.³⁵¹

In *The Trumpet*, Bauer sarcastically accuses Hegel, the "Master of Deceit", of "adultery" with the "Whore of Reason", he characterises Hegel as the devil incarnate, a corrupter of youth and as a cult leader with his own "disciples" from Hell.³⁵² This method of delivery, far from being merely stylistic was deeply rooted in the content of Hegelianism as Bauer understood it. In a telling phrase which echoes Hegel's own analysis of the fall of man from the Garden of Eden in the *Logic*, Bauer asserts that it was the "cunning of the serpent which brought our forebears to the Fall", that is, the tree of knowledge is the "deadly web of the system" of philosophical principles. Everything is questioned, nothing is believed and everything is corroded. In other words, critique itself, according to this parody is the work of the devil, not the work of the Lord. Bauer, of course, also parodied Hegel's own centrality as an emissary from God in an attempt to undermine the pretentious absurdity of such a claim, he says,

³⁵¹See Stepelevich, 1987, p186.

³⁵²Ibid, 1987, p178.

Hegel was called forth and fixed at the centre of the University of Berlin!

Although, of course, when it comes to the presentation of his own views then the apocalyptic form which is in keeping genre remains. In his role of devil's advocate, Bauer identifies Hegel's "Absolute Idea", the substance of the world as appearance and the Self-Consciousness of the same, as the "kernel" of Hegel's system. Such an idea specifically reduces religious belief, holds Bauer, to an "objectified" moment of Self-Consciousness itself. Thus Bauer sums up the repercussions of this in the following manner,

Who partakes of this kernel is dead to God, for he holds God dead.³³³

The political consequences of this death for Bauer, should not surprise us, again emerging from the problems of nihilism and its apparent empty horizons of negative freedom, he said,

And so philosophy must be active in politics, and whenever the established order contradicts the Self-Consciousness of philosophy, it must be directly attacked and shaken. Servitude, tutelage, is unbearable to the free spirit:....³³⁴

However, in a further twist, Bauer, still in the guise of our Christian pietist, then goes on to raise his objections to the involvement of the "philosopher" in these same vulgar temporal regions, the foremost of which is the notion of the Enlightened philosopher judge, if not quite the Platonic philosopher-King.³³⁵ According to Bauer, this role of judge, while automatically setting Hegel against the state, Church and religion of his day contained even greater dangers than the death of God. In his later essay, *The Genus and the Crowd*, which appeared in his own journal, the *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung*, 1844, he makes it clear that he believes that the price of this untiring critique for its own sake may be too high, he says for example,

³³³Ibid, 1987, p181.

³³⁴Ibid, 1987, p184.

³³⁵Ibid, 1987, p185.

Criticism has brought forth bright and rigid men into an illusory self-reliance, and they already claim to know the whole of the world and are quite ready to rule it. But it also calls forth a reaction which also grows to become universal and all-encompassing, for it strengthens itself through these bright figures who have now become puzzled by the criticisms thrown at them.³⁵⁶

In other words, criticism for the sake of criticism is ultimately nihilistic and freedom reduced only to the level of the process of social recognition undermines itself since social recognition is, as we have seen, "empty of positive content". Again, as Nietzsche was to comment later, "Nihilism- when the highest values devalue themselves". Bauer echoes Hegel's own concerns, which Hegel voiced with regard to Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew* [and with regard to the aesthetic theory of the Schlegel brothers].³⁵⁷

In any case, in the closing pages of this article Bauer, anticipating later positivist critiques of Marxism, paints a picture of two stark alternatives; on the one hand there is a sardonic glance at notions of an 'organic' conception of mass satisfaction and harmony. Rather, it is likely that some measure of naked coercion would be required to exert the total social control necessary for the successful implementation of such a plan, there would be, in Bauer's view, a "despotic condition of subdued atoms". Or the very opposite, ultimately the existence of free criticism would threaten this same conception.

Hence, all these attempts end in an inevitable war of the multitude against spirit and Self-Consciousness, and the significance of this war is found in nothing less than the fact that in it the cause of *criticism is set against the genus*. (my emphasis).

Not unsurprisingly, neither Feuerbach nor Bauer look to an extra-terrestrial world for redemption, they do not posit chaos in this world as opposed to the order of a heavenly world. There is nothing reassuring in their alternate vision and certainly no promise of a better life to come in a different form of existence. Like

³⁵⁶Ibid, 1987, p204.

³⁵⁷ Hegel, 1993, pps 69-75, also objects to the development of the concept of irony by the Schlegel brothers, on the grounds that it is not properly philosophical, or speculative. Hegel complains that the Schlegels absorbed the abstract "I" of Fichte into their own form of irreverence and literary criticism. The danger says Hegel is that now "nothing has any value in its real and actual nature". In effect, Hegel is suggesting that this kind of modern irreverence which refuses to take anything seriously is ultimately nihilistic.

Hegel, both Feuerbach and Bauer are less sanguine than apocalypticists proper who might posit a second coming. Suggesting perhaps, that the move from eschatology, in general terms, to political prophecy is not inevitable.

In the case of Feuerbach, the present is a time in which sensuous experience and not religious belief would be elevated to the only mode of legitimate expression of and for, love between men, acting as the fundamental basis of all social interaction (it was certainly Feuerbach's sense of materialism, expressed in the notion of the "species-being", which so appealed to the young Marx). In the case of Bauer, the endless infinite of critique for its own sake creates a perpetual and ongoing conversation which would, in all likelihood, undermine the stability of society by pitting the intellectuals against the masses and in turn undermine critique itself.

Thus we find that both Feuerbach and Bauer remain very cautious as to what all of this might mean politically. Feuerbach, for his part, undoubtedly hoped to offer a new secular humanism³⁵⁸ which was at least implicitly critical of the ruling order of the day, and while it is true that Bauer's suspicion of the masses suggests a more ambiguous political legacy, it is also true that his vision of the independent critic has much in common with the bourgeois anti-hero cosmopolitanism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The independent critic is the new discovery but that new discovery must leave the multitude behind. The more fundamental point here is that both Feuerbach and Bauer address one and the same problem; that of the continuing problematic of man's self-estrangement [Entfremdung].

As far as our study of Stirner is concerned, he has two dominant and equally unpalatable eschatological readings of Hegel to deal with. In Feuerbach's 'species-being', Stirner can only see yet another oppressive abstraction and the elitist pretensions of absolute critique are suggestive enough, both remain within and produce, new alienation's [Entfremdung], on the one hand the notion of man the species-being and on the other, the aloof eccentric social critic. As we shall see in a moment, Stirner wants to take Hegel's account of the 'privileged standpoint', or philosophical historian, in a different direction, one which he holds to be the avatar

³⁵⁸Feuerbach, 1985, p332, it has been remarked by David Leopold that Feuerbach closes *The Essence of Christianity* with something like a re-establishment of Christian sentiment, something which Stirner certainly picked up on. However, it is also worth noting that these comments fall within the context of a discussion of bread and wine seen as a kind of epiphany or celebration of earthly sensuality much like Hegel's own remarks on the "last supper" in the Early Theological Writings.

of Hegel's method, but not in the direction of a transfiguration into Feuerbach's species-being or critic but towards a new conception, perhaps the ultimate conception of individual sovereignty.

In any case, as David Leopold suggests in his lucid introduction to Stirner's book, Stirner attempts

...to unsettle by demonstrating that modernity fails to escape from the very thing that it claims to have outgrown- namely religious modes of thought.³⁵⁹

Stirner's cause is not one which is committed to the *content* of the notion of the "Absolute Idea" itself in all its Hegelian richness and historically loaded *Spirit*, reason, art and religion but with the form of the "possessor" of Egoistic knowing. Stirner sought to affirm the potential of *all* men (despite his endless 'I' statements), as an anti-essentialist uniqueness, he cannot settle for an abstraction such as species-being which is potentially totalitarian, like all such abstractions in his view. For Stirner, the ultimate content of knowledge as self-knowledge matters little, he is only concerned that the form of revelation be compatible with such a know-er. Metaphorically speaking, the cargo that the vessel is carrying matters much less than the shape of the vessel itself, which must be designed for speed.

³⁵⁹ Stirner, 1995, Editors Introduction, pxix.

At the entrance of the modern time stands the 'God-man'. At its exit will only the God in the God-man disappear?

Max Stirner

II

The Egoist

In Stirner's view, Hegel's conception of "Absolute Knowing" is nothing more than an assertion of the complete, total and irrevocable power of the individual *qua* individual.³⁶⁰ In an allusion to Hegel's concept Stirner said,

Absolute thinking is the affair of the human spirit, and this is a holy spirit. Hence this thinking is an affair of the clerics, who have a 'sense for it', a sense for the 'highest interests of mankind', for 'the spirit'.³⁶¹

But what does Stirner propose in place of the 'absolute', the 'species-being' and the 'critic'. Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*, appears to anticipate the 'popular psychology' genre of our own time. In presentation at least, it seems to be a literary assertion of his own personal proclivities, and the more interesting sections appear to be a kind of personal testimony, a 'quack' psychology full of random assertions and individual quirks.³⁶² One implication of this psychological reading of Stirner is that his book becomes a-political, concerned rather with aspects of 'personal development' in the narrowest sense.

Thus some authorities have often portrayed Stirner as a 'psychological egoist' in a related sense, meaning that he held to the empirical claim that all intentional behaviour is motivated by the individual agents greatest interest.³⁶³ As David Leopold suggests, the passages which support such a view in the text are

³⁶⁰ Ibid, 1995, pps 318-19, where he concludes, "People have always supposed that they must give me a destiny lying outside myself, so that at last they demanded that I should lay claim to the human because I am- man. This is the Christian magic circle. Fichte's ego too is the same essence outside me, for every one is ego; and, if only this ego has rights, then it is 'the ego', it is not I. But I am not an ego along with other ego's, but the sole ego: I am unique.And it is only as this unique I that I take everything for my own, as I set myself to work, and develop myself, only as this. I do not develop men, not as man, but, as I, I develop- myself. This is the meaning of the- unique one."

³⁶¹ Stirner, 1995, p 306.

³⁶² Even Stepelevich, 1987, p14, describes Stirner as the apotheosis of a "withered.. irrational egoism". The net affect of such an assessment is to reduce Stirner's political ideas to a set of rather anodyne psychological catechisms of little historical interest.

³⁶³ See Leopold in Stirner, 1995, p24.

infrequent, more accurately, Stirner merely held that the power of the *Ego*, the *willing* actions, are simply *our* actions rather than actions carried out in the name of self-interest. While Stirner would certainly have found a measure of agreement in some elements of laissez-faire doctrine, for example; such as the idea that it was not the business of government to be involved in the commercial decisions of individual agents, he would not subscribe to the laissez-faire commitment to the individuals self-interest.³⁶⁴ In other words, he might well agree with certain motifs of Adam Smith's thought but he would never have subscribed to many of Smith's observations concerning the necessity of state intervention or his support for legal and juridical processes. Likewise, he would have found little agreement with an argument such as that given by Mandeville, in his "Fable of the Bees", to the effect that private vices add up to public benefits.³⁶⁵ As we shall see, Stirner would have simply rejected any notion of a collective *public* benefit just as he would also oppose the idea that any man should be a slave to his passions.³⁶⁶

In two very important respects the *Ego* differs from texts of the 'pop psychology' genre. In the first case, Stirner's notion of 'personal growth' is not read psychologically through the development of individual persons, rather, Egoism is only metaphorically compared with individual growth. In reality Stirner reads the development of Egoism from his own idiosyncratic stadial account of history, as being composed of three phases, the "realist", the "idealist" and finally the "Egoist" phase.³⁶⁷ Secondly, and still in the first part of his book, there is an extensive engagement with all the most important political ideologies of the period, such as conservatism, liberalism and communism, a critical project hardly likely to be undertaken by a 'psychologist' of personal growth.

In Stirner's critique of these theories he often appears to anticipate Nietzsche's thought, so much so that it was once suspected that the latter may have plagiarised from the former.³⁶⁸ However, Stirner's *Egoism and Its Own* is not a popular manual of personal growth, but a political treatise on the "exit" from modernity. In other words, modernity, in Stirner's account, continues to be populated by 'ghosts', 'spirits', 'phantasms', 'demons' and all sorts of other self-alienation's [Entfremdung].³⁶⁹ The central question for Stirner is how to *ultimately*

³⁶⁴Ibid, 1995, pps. 174-5.

³⁶⁶Paraphrasing, Thomas, 1980, p129.

³⁶⁷ Stirner, 1995, pps 13-18.

³⁶⁸ There is no hard evidence that Nietzsche ever read Stirner, see Gilman and Parent, 1991.

³⁶⁹ As in the case of Marx, which I will cover in the next chapter, Stirner seems to have little appreciation of the dual sense of alienation often used by Hegel.

break out of this condition. As Leopold says of the second constructive half of Stirner's book, there his task is to "characterise the future epoch of egoism".³⁷⁰

Egoism, according to Stirner, is practically based upon his notion of "ownness".³⁷¹ For Stirner, ownness is a form of self-mastery, but not in the stoical sense, for Stirner does not regard self-denial highly, rather, any waiving of one's own appetites or pleasures remains a mis-guided way of self-aggrandisement, in the end, altruism being but a *sub-specie* of the self-action of the Ego. In general, self-assumed obligations, such as the obligation to others, is rather, but another form of alienation since one only has an obligation to oneself, since all social ties which bind are alienation's according to him.³⁷² Similarly, ownness must not be sacrificed to the passions, and here there is common ground with stoicism, for Stirner suggests that one must not be a slave to any over riding purpose such as the drive to accumulate property or amass private wealth. According to Stirner this is a "one sided, unopened and narrow egoist".³⁷³

"Ownness", for Stirner, suggests that one must always dominate ideas rather than the other way around, ideas must never become fixed in the mind or dominate one's life.³⁷⁴ Thus Marx's later criticism in the *German Ideology* that Stirner remains trapped within the mystified form of Hegelian idealism, is largely hitting out at a straw man since Stirner clearly repudiates the notion of idealism in that sense.³⁷⁵ Stirner is always concerned with the corporeal body, his sensuous existence, but it must not dominate just as ideas and thoughts must not. Thus he says of his body, ... "it thirsts for [freedom] hourly".³⁷⁶ All in all then, as David Leopold suggests, Stirner's ideal seems to be the cultivation of an "emotional detachedness" towards both one's passions and ideas.³⁷⁷

As one might expect from all that has been said so far, Stirner's objections to Feuerbach are based upon Stirner's revulsion with the notion of some social conception of morality. Yet, despite this, David Leopold, for example, holds that

³⁷⁰ Stirner, 1995, pxxii.

³⁷¹ Ibid, 1995, p 141.

³⁷² Ibid, 1995, p 175.

³⁷³ Ibid, 1995, p 70.

³⁷⁴ Ibid, 1995, p 302, thus he says, "The thought is my own only when I can indeed subjugate it, but it can never subjugate me, never fanaticizes me, or make me the tool of its realisation".

³⁷⁵ Marx, 1976, p 130, take for example, "We spoke of the German philosophical conception of history. Here, in Saint Max, we find a brilliant example of it. The speculative idea, the abstract conception, is made the driving force of history, and history is thereby turned into the mere history of philosophy".

³⁷⁶ Stirner, 1995, 1995, p141.

³⁷⁷ Ibid, 1995, p xxiii.

Stirner was not a nihilist.³⁷⁸ Leopold cites Stirner's discussion of Nero, where Stirner appears to condemn him, not on his record of immorality and his various violations of others but because he was "possessed", much like a moral man, his passions were allowed to gain the upper hand and violate his own self-mastery.³⁷⁹ Thus concludes Leopold,

Stirner is clearly committed to the 'non-nihilistic' view that a certain kind of character and mode of behaviour (namely, autonomous individuals and actions) are to be viewed above all others.³⁸⁰

However, for two reasons, the kind of minimalist concept of 'morality' invoked here by Stirner against what he considered to be the oscillating 'antediluvian' morality which dominates, indeed his call for an understanding of morality which is beyond 'good' and 'evil', has more in common with the nihilist rejection of all values than this largely linguistically meaningless and philosophically dubious concept of morality that David Leopold suggests. First, Stirner wants to re-define the word morality out of existence, in order to do this he has to render it virtually meaningless, he is able to say, for example, "We [the Egoists] are perfect altogether, and on the whole earth there is not one man who is a sinner" Secondly, on a slightly deeper philosophical plane, it is clear that Stirner rejects all values as essentially relative to time and place. For Stirner there can be no 'absolute truth', he says for example, "To the believer, truths are a *settled* thing, a fact; to the freethinker, a thing that is still to be *settled*".³⁸¹ And later in the text, during a discussion of the "owner" he said,

You alone are the truth, or rather, you are more than the truth, which is nothing at all before you. You too do assuredly 'criticise', but you do not ask about a 'higher truth'- namely, one should be higher than you,³⁸²...

Indeed, he also says in the same passage that the truths of others are reducible to their power and if their power proves less than the "owner's" then it must merely "dissolve", "their truth is their *nothingness*", claims Stirner. Stirner's conception of 'truth' is solipsistic, "...it [truth] has its *value* not in itself but in *me*. Of

³⁷⁸ Ibid, 1995, p xxiv.

³⁷⁹ Ibid, 1995, pps 51-53.

³⁸⁰ Ibid, 1995, pxxiv.

³⁸¹ Ibid, 1995, p 306.

³⁸² Ibid, 1995, p 312.

itself it is *valueless*. The truth is *a- creature*.³⁸³ Also, we shall see that Stirner's positions on the rule of law, on crime and punishment, on justice and equality are entirely consistent with this solipsistic relativism. For example, Stirner's new moral compass beyond good and evil does not even rule out incest, infanticide and murder.³⁸⁴ It is difficult to imagine how much closer Stirner could be to the traditional understanding of a philosophical and ethical nihilist than this without explicitly declaring it so.

Stirner's concept of the Egoist emerged out of the direct challenge to what he saw as the reproduction of theological alienation's and self-estrangement's by Feuerbach and Bauer. Stirner posited the Hegelian "Absolute Idea" in corporeal terms, not as the "self-thinking idea" but as *the* corporeal reality, that of a grasping individualism without moral or ethical restraint properly speaking, since each Egoist was only capable of what they were capable of, none could do more than they had the power to do. Self-restraint is a meaningless phrase if Stirner is to be understood correctly. The avatar of freedom is what any given individual can fill the empty horizon of their own lives with. Life according to Stirner, only has the meaning that any given individual can ascribe it, this is the horror of the nihilistic empty negative freedom of the French Revolution and the Terror. With the death of God in the thought of Feuerbach and Bauer, the empty space is ready to be filled with the *nothing* of the Ego, a 'being' allegedly in a constant state of becoming.

³⁸³ Ibid, 1995, p 313.

³⁸⁴ Ibid, 1995, p281-2.

In the history of the dialectic Stirner has a place apart, the final, extreme place.

Gilles Deleuze³⁸⁵

III

The Prophet

In his influential book on Nietzsche, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Gilles Deleuze devotes a section of Chapter 5, entitled *The Overman: Against the Dialectic*,³⁸⁶ to the place of Stirner in nineteenth century thought. The question Deleuze essentially addresses is this; in what relation does Stirner's Egoism stand to the thought of Hegel? This question primarily arises because Stirner's own estimation of his powers would appear, despite the entire thrust of his radical atheism, towards a kind of conception of personal divinity, in the closing pages of *The Ego and Its Own* Stirner the prophet said,

They say of God, 'names name thee not'. That holds good for me: no concept expresses me, *nothing that is designated as my essence exhausts me*; they are only names. Likewise they say of God that he is perfect and has no calling to strive after perfection. That too holds good of me alone.³⁸⁷ (my emphasis).

and furthermore,

I am owner of my might, and I am so when I know myself as unique.

All future time is open and an endless horizon of possibilities, the omnipotent Ego will fill the future with the pro-jections of *Its* self-will. Significantly, the German irregular verb *Sein* [to be] is the knowing component of the sentence [Ich bin Ego], to be is to be Ego. Every thing "pales before the sun of this consciousness" [der Sonne dieses Bewußtseins].³⁸⁸ In other words, Stirner appears to re-apply Hegel's own critique, in-so-far as he explicitly takes Hegel's own analysis of the Enlightenment, where one-sided rationality is exposed as

³⁸⁵ Deleuze, 1992, p159.

³⁸⁶ Ibid, 1992, p147.

³⁸⁷ Stirner, 1995, p324.

³⁸⁸ Ibid, p324 and Reclam, p412.

Utilitarianism, to its logical conclusions in social practice since only that which is useful to the Ego is useful *per se*.

The sense in which Stirner's thought might represent the final position of the dialectic is a complex problem, not least because many of Hegel's interpreters would hold that the dialectic does not rest in any final position but is contradiction in a state of endless becoming. If one subscribes to such an interpretation then it is hardly likely that any one theorist or historical figure is likely to become an avatar.³⁸⁹ Yet Gilles Deleuze argues that within the Young Hegelian movement Stirner merits a special place because his thought constituted the end of the dialectic *properly speaking*. In other words, Stirner's self-appropriation of his own powers, his own capacities and desires and his own freedoms represents a kind of absolute sovereignty of self-assertion. Stirner's Egoism represents, in other words, not just another programmatic interpretation of the Hegelian manifesto, but the logical limits of the personal development of self-power and individual sovereignty *per se*. In a sense, Stirner posits the 'end of man'. The similarities with Nietzsche's conception of the "Last-Man" should be briefly recalled here.

Nietzsche, who we shall discuss more fully shortly, argued in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and elsewhere that the final product of two thousand years of Christian thought was the "Last-Man". The "Last-Man" is predominantly a product of dominant Christian values, he is a product of pity, the Christian value *par excellence*, according to Nietzsche. Thus modern anarchism, communism, egalitarianism and democracy are, in his view, the final and most decadent political manifestation of such values and such men. Nietzsche despised these "Last-Men" because they expected to receive their goods and satisfactions 'on a plate', they turned away from exertion and effort, the "last men" were, therefore, selfish in the deepest sense of the word, they were soft and self-serving.

It would seem, therefore, that there are at least two very different descriptions of the kind of man who is constitutive of such an eschatological end state in these post-Hegelian times. On the one side we have the Egoist who is a model of self-power, self-reliance, a lawgiver and negatively moving creature, he is what he is not, as Sartre might have said. Or on the other side, we have Nietzsche's "Last-Men", the resentful, destructive and grasping individual of sloth and laziness, and of course I note, if only provisionally, that the "Last-Men" appear to be the precise opposite of the *Übermensch*.

³⁸⁹ Marx, 1973, "The Method of Political Economy", pps. 100-108.

In his book *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze implicitly separates these two conceptions with reference to the Nietzschean idea of the “will to power” as a *active* and *reactive* force. According to Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche, reactive forces are those actions which recoil from some previous action, energy, or position, often perceived to be a ‘harm’, thus they are always self-limiting because they react against a pre-set agenda, their behaviour is always set by some external agenda or other. However, an active force, on the other hand, is built upon *nothing*, in other words, not according to some *wrong* type of action, such action allegedly comes from some deep well of personal ‘authenticity’.³⁹⁰ In this sense, active force is supposedly *beyond* good and evil.

Staying with these two characterisations for a moment we can see that Stirner’s Egoist does not lend itself easily to the Deleuzean-Nietzschean model of an *active* force. Stirner was dialectically engaged with the humanist agenda setting models provided by Feuerbach and Bauer, and in turn with Hegel’s understanding of modernity as the progressive unfolding of Self-Consciousness. Stirner had much to react against, as we have already seen, he sought to define Egoism over and against what he perceived to be the continuing theological alienation’s and self-estrangement’s represented in the “species-being” and in the “critic”. In other words, the Egoist is not the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, the creator of new values, since Stirner’s Egoist is far more likely to reject the old moral tables of values, and such values as he represents, are only those which are minimally required for such acts of destruction. In Deleuzean terms, the Egoist is a self-serving *reactive* nihilist.

This is the precise point where the important eschatological milieu which I have outlined becomes theoretically decisive. Why, for example, are we being asked to take Stirner’s Egoism more seriously than Feuerbach’s humanism? Stirner’s response to this question is to *prophetically* deliver the Ego in order that it appears to be an historical inevitability. Thus in another version of the ‘End of History’, history itself will cease to have an independent existence as the self-supporting Ego makes the future its own. The real question as to the actual inevitability and validity of these claims in reality, through the actual passage of time, matters little, for the purpose of the present study, the important point is that Stirner himself, in adopting the prophetic form of delivery, indicates his desire to be taken seriously as a prophet of the future.

³⁹⁰This phrase belongs to Micheal Tanner.

We are supposed to believe in Stirner's claims because they allegedly reveal what will inevitably take place in the future. The *prophetic* eschatologist, as opposed to the *ex eventu* variety, wants to close the gap in consciousness that he perceives exists between what has already occurred in his consciousness and the unreflective consciousness' around him, he wants to raise consciousness by creating a kind of *déjà vu* effect in his audience. Stirner's Egoism is the new "privileged standpoint", it is ontologically 'true' because *he* is apparently able to conceive of it in the first instance. But unlike Hegel's immanence of Reason in the present and its legitimacy in the spiritual adventures of the past, Stirner's Ego can only be validated conclusively with the actual appearance of Egoism on the world agenda of the future as described by the prophet.

As we saw in the introduction, one can also now see the significance of the ambiguous authorial specificity of *The Ego and Its Own*. Much of *The Ego and Its Own* is composed in a first-person narrative, thus we are led to suppose that Max Stirner is the Egoist, but then, Max Stirner is a *nom de guerre*. Thus we should not be surprised to find that Stirner does not accept any personal responsibility for whatever use his book may be put to by other *Egos*, even though he anticipates that political mischief might well result from his writings. Stirner is positing a deep structural transformation in the consciousness of man and as such he cannot be held personally responsible for simply elucidating the inevitable. Just as one might hold that though the revealed God created man, God cannot bear the responsibility for the decisionism of man long after that initial act of creation. Similarly, Stirner holds that Stirner must not be held responsible for this act of divine authorship,

I see how men are fretted in dark superstition by a swarm of ghosts. If to the extent of my powers I let a bit of daylight fall in on the nocturnal spookery, is that perchance because love to you inspires this in me? Do I write out of love of men? No, I write because I want to procure for my thoughts an existence in the world; even if I foresaw that these thoughts would deprive you of your rest and your peace, even if I saw the bloodiest wars and the fall of many generations springing up from the seed of this thought- I would nevertheless scatter it. Do with it what you will and can, that is your affair and does not trouble me.³⁹¹

³⁹¹Stirner, 1995, pp262-3.

Continuing in the same divinely inspirational vein, Stirner draws some conclusions as to the value of his revelation to others and where it might well lead them, he said,

You will perhaps have only trouble, combat, and death from it, very few will draw joy from it.

In Stirner's prophetic imagination, the idea that nothing could really have been avoided, is the real lesson of the retrospective self-justificatory prophet who must bring the daylight to men's lives. In one of these typically prophetic moments and while railing against the millennial aspirations of the German Nationalists, Stirner offered personal testimony to his divine greatness,

To-morrow they carry thee to the grave; soon thy sisters, the peoples, will follow thee. But, when they have all followed, then-mankind is buried, and I am my own, I am the laughing heir!

Stirner's genealogy of modernity charts the death of God, that most profound crisis of the 'spirit', but unlike others, he claims he has no need of spiritual resuscitation. In a striking series of images which recall some of Hegel's own in the *Phenomenology* (and Feuerbach's theology) Stirner argues that modernity begins with the Reformation. Thus with Luther, claims Stirner, Christianity returned to the question of the "heart", indeed he says,

The heart, from day to day more un-Christian, loses the contents with which it had busied itself, until at last nothing but empty *warm-heartedness* is left it, the quite general love of men, the love of man, the consciousness of freedom, 'Self-Consciousness'.³⁹²

Stirner recognises that this represents the end of religion and the death of God, of course, but more importantly, he further recognises that the turn towards an "Absolute Knowing" Self-Consciousness will undermine everything in its own wake, leaving behind the emptiness of the nihilistic moment. Following the above passage he continues,

³⁹² Stirner, 1995, p28.

Only so [with Self-Consciousness] is Christianity complete, because it has become bald, withered, and void of contents. There are now no contents whatever against which the heart does not mutiny, unless indeed the heart unconsciously or without 'Self-Consciousness' lets them slip in.

In other words, in Stirner's account, the feelings of empathy and the mutual understandings which end with the social recognition of adult autonomy in the events of the French Revolution, become transparent to Reason and reflexive cross-examination. Thus the celebrated ladder of the *Phenomenology* which is supposed to lead one to the "Absolute Idea", is thus kicked away before one gets there due to the creeping effect of estrangement. For Stirner, these events bring a crisis of a kind even for him, indeed a crisis that was far worse than the problem of the 'loss of belief' in the content of Christianity that Christianity must address. For Stirner, the greater problem was the profound "lie" promoted by the young Hegelian ideologies which were rushing in to fill the void (and here is another remarkable anticipation of Nietzsche). Thus his war against the notion of man the "species-being" and the 'God' of "criticism" was central to his whole project, indeed it was his *raison d'Être*. But in a nihilist modernity where Self-Consciousness had apparently cut the ground from its own feet, what legitimacy could not be found for any position that could oppose the "hearts" occasional "slip" back into the new self-estrangement's? It was Stirner's self-proclaimed mission to expose this phenomena and its most important adherents, Feuerbach and Bauer.

IV

The Political Philosophy of Anarchism

Stirner's images of the modern state are, by turns, among his most memorable and significant contributions to political philosophy but the question remains as to worth of these impressionistic ideas to the tradition of Western political theory. Returning to Hegel, we see that the state is ...“the complex inner articulation of the ethical”, and ...“the architectonics of the rational...”, he insists, for example, that the modern state pursues collective aims in a way that leaves room for the expression of individuality.³⁹³ For Stirner, on the other hand, the state is the personification of modern evil.³⁹⁴ As David Leopold suggests, according to Stirner, the state is a beast and a machine: both “Lion and Eagle” but also a giant impersonal system of cogs which move “the clockwork ofindividual minds”.³⁹⁵ The state is both the God, for some men, and the work of the Devil in others, “the Lord of my Spirit, who demands faith and proscribes to me articles of faith, the creed of legality”. In Faustian imagery, the state is also the one for whom we must pledge our very “souls”.³⁹⁶ Stirner's critique of the state was a part and parcel of his blanket rejection of all collective values, social norms, standards and indeed any entity which could be described in institutional terms, he said,

As long as there still exists even one institution which the individual may not dissolve, the Ownness and self-appurtenance of me is still very remote.³⁹⁷

All social norms stand opposed to the Ego because these posit a collective, self-estranged interest which, by definition, cannot ever be commensurable with the particular interest of “ownness”. Old Testament commandments and Kantian formulations such as the ‘categorical imperative’ carry little weight with Stirner, in his terms these are the collective expressions of a social oppression which sought to limit the particular powers of the individual Ego. In this regard Stirner's rejection of universals and the language of universals may have echoes in some modern

³⁹³ See Cornell, Rosenfeld and Carlson [Eds], pxi.

³⁹⁴ Hegel, 1991, p 15.

³⁹⁵ Stirner, 1995, pxxv.

³⁹⁶ Stirner, 1995, p273.

³⁹⁷ Stirner, 1985, p192.

analytic arguments such as those of Quine or Ryle.³⁹⁸ Stirner, was, for example, well acquainted with David Hume's critique of such universals.³⁹⁹

Returning to the case of the state, Stirner posits this antagonism in terms which directly challenge Kantian as well as Hegelian metaphysics,

Own will and the state,.... are powers in deadly hostility, between which no 'perpetual peace' is possible.⁴⁰⁰

Stirner simply rejects the immanence of Reason and state law, even upon utilitarian grounds, supporting rather, forms of social transgression. In the case of murder for example, he says that those who have within their 'power' to murder shall do so, those who have it within their power to punish the murderer, will do so, and those who have it within their power to commit murder without sanction, will also do so. To be sure, in Kant's schema, Stirner in legitimating actions which may well be self-defeating is relinquishing his power as a moral agent, he is either feeble minded or simply insane. But this is entirely the point because according to Stirner, Kantian morality exists only as an abstract ought of community whereas the Ego is a sovereign power without reserve. In other words, anticipating the modern anti-psychiatry movement in this regard, Stirner holds that it is society that is 'insane' not the Egoist. Thus says Stirner,

..my satisfaction decides about my relation to men, and that I do not renounce, from any fit of humility, even the power over life and death.⁴⁰¹

Stirner does not view the self-power of the Ego as an end to be attained in itself, or even as a means to some higher-order good, such as one might expect to find in the service of Reason, freedom or authenticity, Stirner is no existentialist. The measure of self-power available to the individual just *is*. For the Ego there is no end to be attained, it stands against all such moral oughts, whether cultural or religious, which would want to make something of us.⁴⁰² According to Stirner such ideas are "wheels in the head"⁴⁰³ or "spooks" [*Der Spuk*], that is, self-estrangement's

³⁹⁸See Quine, 1953.

³⁹⁹Stirner, 1985, p79.

⁴⁰⁰Ibid, 1985, p175.

⁴⁰¹Ibid, 1985, p282.

⁴⁰²Ibid, 1995, p216.

⁴⁰³Stirner, 1991, p46, the actual term used by Stirner is "die Sparren", which literally means rafter i.e. a joist which is used to hold a roof up. The English translator gives 'Wheels in the head'.

which would simply replace one set of fixed ideas with others. Thus in Stirner's system of naked power relations there is no room for philosophy or theology. God is dead,⁴⁰⁴ philosophy is dead, and especially the various notions of 'Absolute' of his own milieu. For example, take Stirner's demonstration of how his own concept of the Ego is different from that of Fichte's, much earlier, transcendental Ego? He explains,

When Fichte says, 'the ego is all', this seems to harmonise perfectly with my thesis. But it is not that the ego *is* all, but the ego *destroys* all, and only the self-dissolving ego, the never-being ego, the - finite ego is really I. Fichte speaks of the 'absolute' ego, but I speak of me, the transitory ego.⁴⁰⁵

Fichte posits the notion of the Ego as the form of the underlying reality of all things, thus it is *the* great universal, Stirner, in complete contrast to this posits only the particular Ego which is present to his consciousness, it is the Egoist of the 'privileged standpoint', thus it is not a moral ought but a prophetic description of what will be. Stirner's Egoism is the "creative nothing" of the new nihilist world outlook. As Nicholas Lobkowitz suggests, Stirner is,

...the man who made the final step....which leads beyond Hegelianism and negates it. For Stirner achieved the final concretization of Hegelianism by reducing all Hegelian categories to the naked individual self;....⁴⁰⁶

As we have seen already, it is not the Ego's spirit that thirsts for freedom *à la* Hegel, but its body. Any given measure of freedom that a corporeal body can enjoy is, therefore, a reflection of its ability to mobilise its self-power.⁴⁰⁷ As such this Ego is an entity which *is* constant fluidity, in its constant condition of becoming from one moment to the next it can only be defined retroactively. Again, from this perspective of absolute negativity, one can conclude that Stirner remains constant in his opposition to all social institutions *per se* and his invective is never more ferocious than when directed towards ideas as democracy, communism, the state or the nation, since all such institutions are, in turn, underpinned by collective norms and values which bind one to yesterdays, or even to that mornings decisions.

⁴⁰⁴Stirner, 1995, p140.

⁴⁰⁵Ibid, 1995, p163.

⁴⁰⁶See Stepelevich, 1987, p14.

⁴⁰⁷Stirner, 1995, p141.

Gilles Deleuze has suggested in his own analysis of Stirner that this means that,

Overcoming alienation thus means pure, cold annihilation, a recovery which lets nothing which it recovers subsist: "it is not that the ego *is* all, but the ego *destroys* all" (Stirner).⁴⁰⁸

For Deleuze, "Stirner is the dialectician who reveals nihilism as the truth of the dialectic", here Deleuze finds agreement with both Crosby and Lobkowitz. The idea is this; the transformation of slave recognition in the *Phenomenology* culminates with the "I that is We and the We that is I", that is, with the social recognition of complete mutual autonomy. But as I have already suggested, this avatar is empty of all value-content because it is composed of self-knowledge which is not yet 'inwardized'. Thus the claim by Kant, Schiller and Hegel that this immature idea of freedom presented itself on the world stage during the Terror of the French Revolution. Deleuze, Crosby and so on, hold, and this is the main point with regard to Stirner, that Stirner is the first to adopt such a point of view nakedly in a thesis of political philosophy.

Stirner called the Egoist the "Unique" one, meaning of course, that each individual *qua* individual is a repository of a completely different mix of characteristics from every one else. In his classic study of nineteenth century thought, and in anticipation of the views of Gilles Deleuze, Karl Löwith said of Stirner's *The Ego and its Own*, "it is in reality an ultimate consequence of Hegel's historical system".⁴⁰⁹ Löwith makes this claim because he takes the view that the last paragraph of "Absolute Knowing" in the *Phenomenology* is literally the completion of the historical development of 'difference'.⁴¹⁰ In other words, what the *know-er* knows is that each is his own, each is free and autonomous, their Self-Consciousness is in inner harmony with the uniqueness of their nature or self in the first place.

Of course, it appears to be quite paradoxical to hold on the one hand that Stirner has no commitments to values of any kind in the manner of the nihilist, while on the other, simultaneously taking the view that he *valued* this same

⁴⁰⁸Deleuze, 1992, p161.

⁴⁰⁹Löwith, 1964, p103.

⁴¹⁰Although the *Phenomenology* should be taken as the last word on the 'spiritual' development of man, it still left room for man's 'logical' development, hence the Science of Logic.

position. However, when the depths of uniqueness, or modern subjectivism are regarded as truly limitless, Stirner would argue, one is faced with the requirement that one can only consume without recourse to the constraints of some naturally grounded morality, a morality which might otherwise be inscribed in the firmament. As Hegel said in the closing lines of the *Phenomenology*, invoking both human and divine inspiration...“from the chalice of this realm of spirits foams forth for Him his own infinitude”. This understanding of the value-neutrality of the Revolution's social recognition, which is ultimately the source of Hegel's unease, is something that Stirner is quite at home in. The idea of scholars such as Löwith and Deleuze is that Stirner represents an extreme political actualisation of this Hegelian dialectic in this final sense, but this does not necessarily denote nihilism as a *positive* result.

We have seen how (in Chapter II) nihilism was a cynical by-product of the Revolutionary Spirit, the political manifestation of which, was the actual French Revolution and the Terror. All of this was revealed in Hegel's *ex eventu* prophetic revelation during the course of the spiritual adventures in the *Phenomenology*. Thus it should not surprise us to find that there is a remarkable similarity between Diderot's profile of the Nephew in *Rameau's Nephew* and that of the Egoist in Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*. Both the Nephew and the Egoist challenged what they saw as the totalitarianism of the linguistic cage, both performed a *fortissimo* of irreverence, neither would defer to any authority, morality or conventional value system and finally both were essentially bohemian ‘wastrels’ who sought only to consume and not create.

Stirner was acutely aware of the nihilist moment which Hegel had discovered in the spiritual and intellectual products of the Enlightenment, the “one-sided rationality” of which Habermas has spoken, however, Stirner held that the other young Hegelian's were not being true to that nihilist moment, they tried to reinvent ‘morality’ or the ‘good’, Stirner rejected this. In this sense he was being true to the historical unfolding of nihilism. Stirner might well symbolise the avatar of modern diremption, atomisation and the privatisation of the individual life-world, but he was also the first to hold to nihilism as a coherent political project in theoretical terms. Nihilism requires, at the very least, a commitment to the philosophical position that all meaning is quite unstable and where meaning exists it must be systematically undermined. Stirner, in creating the Egoist as ‘absolute negativity’ creates a creature who seems to be able to fulfil this task philosophically, at least to his own satisfaction, but what does such a conception

suggest politically? Rejection of the state, as we have seen, but he also has much to say about society and social relations more generally.

Stirner's alternative to social structures, public institutions, political and economic organisation is his "association" or "union of egoists".⁴¹¹ This union is the concrete replacement for the state and "human society". As far as Stirner is concerned "human society" is something which is to be utilised, transformed and eventually "annihilated". The criteria or litmus test of the "union of egoists" must be "an unmeasured freedom of allowances" where one can be oneself, may act as one pleases, may think as one pleases, where one can live in any way that one cares to and by oneself if one so chooses.⁴¹² The key to success for such a union, is free flowing social "intercourse", according to Stirner.⁴¹³

Indeed, Stirner considers "human society" little better than "prison companionship", a situation in which honesty between persons is the first casualty, where furtiveness and secrecy reign and where "plotting" is endemic. Rather, the true "union" would, by definition, be open, honest and each and all would understand that self-willing lies behind each and every action. In such circumstances there would be no need for anything other than the most naked self-assertion of individual desires and proclivities. In addition, membership in the "association" would not be binding, according to Stirner and individuals would be allowed to move in and out of the union as they saw fit.⁴¹⁴ In other words, in somewhat analogous fashion to the Hegelian socially recognitive moment of "Absolute Freedom" during the French Revolution Stirner's "union of egoists" is the social recognition of Egoism by individuals of individuals. Stirner does not shrink away from the Terror as a possible by-product or epiphenomenon of "Absolute Freedom", rather he embraces it all. Hence his defence of criminality, law breaking murder and incest.

One might expect that this socially recognitive "association" would be unlikely to favour property holding, yet interestingly Stirner makes no demand for the abolition of private property. In his view private possessions are one of the basic prerequisites of Egoism. However, he does have a theory concerning the distribution of private property. According to Stirner this phenomena is a historical product of the "respect" for private property which is part and parcel of the

⁴¹¹Stirner, 1995, p161-2.

⁴¹²Ibid, 1995, p189.

⁴¹³Ibid, 1995, p195-6.

⁴¹⁴Ibid, 1995, p209.

development of the laws and regulations of Western market society. For those, such as the socialists and communists, who bemoan the unequal distribution of property which capitalism entails, Stirner simply replies that their solution to this problem, the common holding of all private property in the general interest, to be another meaningless abstraction which simply undermines Egoism and does violence to all individualism. Stirner argues, rather, that private property is perfectly in keeping with the development of the "union of egoists",

Property is recognised in the union, and only in the union, because one no longer holds what is his a fief from any being.⁴¹⁵

Furthermore,

If men reach the point of losing respect for property, every one will have property, as all slaves become free men as soon as they no longer respect the master as master. Unions will then, in this matter too, multiply the individual's means and secure his assailed property.⁴¹⁶

Stirner's analogy with the master-slave dialectic suggests that just as the slave becomes his own master at the very point of disrespect and freedom from the master. So too can the propertyless Ego ascend and accumulate property when all have lost respect for the specifically bourgeois form of property. This is because Stirner equates "respect" with *interest*. In other words, when the "union of egoists" takes hold then no one will any longer care who has property and who has not. Thus under such conditions there would be more than enough private property for those who want it. Clearly, the plausibility of such a theory largely depends upon the notion that each Egoist would have unique, thus differing needs. This is an assumption that Stirner inherits from the Hegelian legacy of modern subjectivism and self-actualisation, the "Absolute Knowing" of uniqueness.

Finally, we come to the historical agents and the mode of this messianic social transformation; Stirner's rebellious ragamuffins, "the proletariat" or "paupers", the "vagabonds" and the young "unruly heads" or intellectuals, the disenfranchised petty bourgeois sons and daughters of modernity.⁴¹⁷ Stirner looked towards the poorest and most motley of society's rejects for individual rebellion, the

⁴¹⁵Ibid, 1995, p279.

⁴¹⁶Ibid, 1995, p229.

⁴¹⁷Ibid, 1995, p102.

total sum of which would bring the whole system of institutions crashing down. Individual rebellion was superior to revolution because all revolution, engagement with political parties and even the revolutionary crowd, required some kind of "self-sacrifice",⁴¹⁸ by individuals on behalf of the collective, this amounted to a loss of "ownness". Individual rebellion, on the other hand, was a method which was in keeping with Egoism because it involved the taking of possessions which individuals wanted and was thus an increase in self-power. He continued,

Revolution and insurrection must not be looked upon as synonymous. The former consists in an overturning of conditions, of the established condition or status, and is accordingly a political or social act; the latter has indeed for its unavoidable consequence a transformation of circumstances, yet does not start from it but from men's discontent with themselves, is not an armed rising, but a rising of individuals, a getting up, without regard to the arrangements that spring from it.⁴¹⁹

However, Stirner did not only look to the modern underclass for salvation, he also saw a role for the "intellectual vagabonds", those who found the "hereditary dwelling-place of their fathers" too "cramped and oppressive" no doubt a physical metaphor for an intellectual condition. Such individuals were perfectly placed to become rebellious, according to Stirner, because they had the time and money to truly educate themselves in the new ideas, thus they break through "traditional bounds" and they "run wild" with "impudent criticism" and an "untamed mania for doubt", (again one recalls the significance of *Rameau's Nephew* for Hegel).

Stirner's vision of social transformation could not be more different from that of the communists, for example, with their organised political revolutionaries, raising of arms and ideological propaganda machines. Rather, in Stirner's apocalyptic imagination he appears to anticipate the idea of a society sliding into gradual decay and dismemberment as Egoist consciousness gained ground, social institutions would become less and less able to deal with increasing levels of non-co-operation among its members. There would probably be a growing 'black market', or alternative economy as citizens would with-hold more and more of their taxes, which is their *Egoistic right*, leaving police forces and standing armies crumbling and starved of cash, crime and corruption would rise steadily and crimes

⁴¹⁸Ibid, 1995, p228.

⁴¹⁹Ibid, 1995, pps. 279-80.

against property would be endemic. Unconventional behaviour would increase throughout society and loose and chaotic alternative "associations" would spread steadily to replace these dying institutions.

This prophetic vision was necessarily dependent upon the elements of Hegelianism and its associated eschatology which I have already considered, the death of God, the idea of histories completion and of the closure to mans self-estrangement, but we must also recall that Stirner also held to the view that these developments would only occur in the 'advanced' "Caucasian" countries of the West. Stirner took the view that the Occident represented the most advanced social development and that civilisations could be charted from simple beginnings to ever more complex models. This kind of racialized stadial conception of development had little to do with either Hegel or eschatology since, although broadly derived from Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy, it was also one of the most unquestioned assumptions of the entire period, including one assumed by Hegel himself.

Related to this Euro-centrism we come to one of the most serious charges which have been levelled against Stirner's, *The Ego and Its Own*; that it is lacking in concrete empirical analysis, that his social agents are the least likely agents of social and individual rebellion and finally, that his idealism leads inevitably to a kind of disinterested political quietism. Marx, for example, holds that Stirner only sought an inward transformation of man. In fact, the very opposite appears to be the case, in one passage of the *Ego* it is clear that Stirner considers the "speculative philosopher" (i.e. Hegel) and the "Shaman" as synonymous for this very same reason, precisely because they are inward looking.⁴²⁰

However, it should also be clear enough from some of Stirner's ideas that he cannot be charged with political quietism. His attack on the state, on capitalism and the market system, on all the political parties of the day; indeed his opposition to all institutions is not polemical or disinterested speculation, but was intended to have an effect, as a consciousness changing prophet he sought nothing less than complete social transformation. This is why he adopted the same prophetic tone throughout his writings as the other Young Hegelians, in order to justify and effect just such a rebellion. But first must come the belief in the irreducible self-power of the Ego, this is a prerequisite of the appropriate, as opposed to misconceived, forms of action.

⁴²⁰Ibid, 1995, p300.

Stirner even anticipated Marx's critique in this regard; Marx's critique of the *Lumpenproletariat* runs that the poor have always been with us and they have *never* rebelled, thus there is no reason to suppose that Stirner's underclass are the messianic agents of social transformation. However, Stirner is quite clear that Egoism has to be the final wave of a new consciousness, its very closure, its messianic inevitably is the guarantee of its success because it is a fact of his *own* consciousness. Stirner says, it is "truly no new wisdom" that the rabble have settled for very little in the past, and when they have demanded more they have been "self-seekers" (in the limited sense of minor pettiness), however, he says, it is not "necessary either that the thing (Egoism) be new, if only *consciousness* of it is present".⁴²¹ Stirner marks a departure because he made explicit something in modernity that Hegel did not: that the end of self-estrangement brought nihilism in its trail, Stirner's response was to embrace this nihilism as a political philosophy, he said,

...only individuals can enter into union with each other, and all alliances and leagues of peoples are and remain mechanical compoundings, because those who come together, at least so far as the 'peoples' are regarded as the ones that have come together, are destitute of will. *Only with the last separation does separation itself end and change to unification* (my emphasis).⁴²²

To be sure, if anarchism is that doctrine which rejects all political authority whilst also maintaining that collective behaviour is not only possible but desirable without such order then Stirner was undoubtedly an anarchist.⁴²³ In addition, Stirner, like all anarchists, had little time for nation states or territoriality and its concomitant monopoly of violence. He rejected all such ideas and all positive law, he supported the full development of each individual and had little time for any social structure, whether economic, political or cultural which did violence to such individualism. However, as we have seen, Stirner does not refuse to theorise modern political institutions because he is an anarchist, rather he is an anarchist because of his position as the first 'post-historical' nihilist. His reading of Hegel's notion of "Absolute Freedom". In other words, his complete denouement of

⁴²¹Ibid, 1995, p229.

⁴²²Ibid, 1995, p205.

⁴²³ For a summary of anarchist principles given by anarchists themselves see Alexander Berkman, 1980, and Peter Kropotkin, (no date given), and Emma Goldman, 1969. For a good scholarly introduction to the history of anarchism see Miller, 1984.

alienation is the root cause of his rejection of political theory as traditionally understood.

The purpose of *The Ego and Its Own* was to transform individuals living in society in order that society itself might be transformed. In order to achieve this Stirner had to sweep away all the remaining expressions of self-estrangement's which continued to haunt individuals. This is why Feuerbach and Bauer were so important for Stirner, for in the thought of these two men was contained the most sophisticated reading to date of the post-historical world following the "absolute standpoint" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. But, asked Stirner, how radical was the notion of species-being ("stuck fast in abstraction",⁴²⁴), and where would it lead, or as in the case of Bauer, what hope was there that critique itself might well assist the Ego? Both Feuerbach and Bauer had failed to learn the most important element of Hegel's teaching; that "Absolute Freedom" was completely value-neutral, thus both Feuerbach's new sensuous being and Bauer's critique should be swept away with this same nihilism.

Finally, in line with the messianic eschatology of the period, a radical shift in consciousness was necessary if the new opportunities which nihilism opened up were to be taken advantage of. The end of self-estrangement brought forth nihilism and thus a nihilist *political response* emerged from within Stirner's 'privileged standpoint' of Egoism, this response ultimately accepted the instability of all meaning. Stirner's agents of social change, the *Lumpenproletariat*, served as the mirror image of this instability, the social underclass of modern society were at least blessed with an unstable *nothing*, which in turn made the "union of egoists" an inevitable historical phenomenon. The only chance if new and inappropriate notions of morality were not to do violence to Stirner's messianic individualism.

However, as we shall see in the chapter which follows, for Marx the die was now radically re-cast after having confronted Stirner. Although many of his chosen targets would continue to consume him, Marx's move towards a political philosophy of self-actualisation had, above all, to answer Stirner's radical individualism. Marx's critique of bourgeois justice was constructed with only two groups in mind, and Stirner did not fit into either of these. On the one hand Marx challenged the classical political economists such as Smith, Malthus, Ricardo, Say and Mill, who he alleges, all took the bourgeois social relation as something 'natural'. And on the other hand, the second group, the Utopian Socialists, saw

⁴²⁴Stirner, 1995, p300.

socialism as nothing more than the full realisation of these same values. In other words, abstract values such as formal freedoms, abstract equality and justice, in their very abstractness only served to mask the concrete problems that are present in the society of their own time, and worse they projected such abstractness into the future in the course of developing their utopian schemes. Since Stirner's prophetic Egoism was anti-essentialist, anti-bourgeois and destructive rather than constructive, it was bound to reject both traditions as well. However, Stirner also stood in the way of Marx's reconstruction of communal forms of justice, thus Marx had to find a way of both agreeing and disagreeing with Stirner. I would now like to examine how he tried to achieve this.

Just as the peoples of Antiquity lived out their pre-history in imagination, in mythology, so we Germans have lived out our post-history [nach Geschichte] in thought, in *philosophy*.⁴²⁵

Marx, 1844⁴²⁶

CHAPTER IV

Post-Historical Existence II: The *Proletariat*

Introduction

In what follows I shall demonstrate that Marx's messianic political philosophy, following Stirner, was a necessary response to the nihilism that he now perceived to be dominant within post-Hegelian thought. Following both Hegel and Stirner, Marx was required to find some new way of legitimating his own 'privileged standpoint' since Stirner had demonstrated that a standpoint that had admitted nihilism through the door of history could not be used to justify a positive political program of any meaningful kind. Yet paradoxically, and despite his occasional denials to the contrary, I shall also insist that Marx's own solution to this problem of nihilism remained a product of the very German Idealism from which he sought to escape.⁴²⁷

In other words, it is generally assumed that at the very least, Marxism is defined by the fact that as a body of philosophy, it locates and signifies a new

⁴²⁵ See the new translation by J O'Malley which runs "Just as ancient peoples live their past in their imagination, in mythology, so we Germans have lived our *future* history in thought, in philosophy", CUP, 1994, p62. The term nach Geschichte can be translated as post-history or after history, however, future history is undoubtedly chosen by O'Malley in order to make Marx's meaning clear and create some distance between his critique of the Hegelian "Absolute Idea" and the "end of history" in the bourgeois sense.

⁴²⁶ *The Portable Karl Marx*, p118, the epigram is from the "Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right".

⁴²⁷ See William Maker, "Hegel's critique of Marx" in Desmond et al, where Maker points out that Marx, while engaging in normative or messianic thinking, adopts the very position that he accuses Hegel of, i.e. of mystifying idealism, since Marx believes in the final analysis that ideas, revolutionary class-consciousness in this case, can change reality. Hegel, in stark contrast makes it clear again and again that it is not the business of philosophy to engage in prophetic political thinking. Also see Kelvin Knight, in the MacIntyre Reader, pps 224-5 where he refers to the myth of Marx's materialism and to the book of the same name by George L. Kline, finally see Carol C. Gould's *Marx's Social Ontology*, MIT, 1978 for similar themes. As Gould suggests, in the final analysis, according to Marx, subjects act *causally* upon objects but objects do not act causally upon subjects but only provide the basic circumstances for the agents self-change. Although Gould holds that this is Marx's position and not Hegel's, it should be obvious from my own description of Hegel's "Absolute Idealism" that I take the view that this is also Hegel's position.

agency of social change in the industrial *proletariat* as the new model army. This 'discovery' is often thought to be revolutionary, that is, it posits knowledge which is monumentally specific to his analysis.⁴²⁸ It is this assumption that I would like to challenge in this chapter since what is often forgotten is that Marx's 'discovery', the proletariat, which was not empirically deduced in any case, but his specific transformation of this idealism, was itself, conditional upon the nihilism of modernity.⁴²⁹ Thus, I will further argue that the rejection of traditional political theory by the revolutionary proletariat in Marx's account, is a necessary move if one accepts certain Stirnerean tropes, such as the latter's eschatological and prophetic attack on alienation [Entfremdung], the death of God and the disenchantment's of the Young Hegelian metaphysic.

Indeed, it is noticeable that Marx's theory of class-consciousness does not emerge from the work of David Ricardo, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson or any of those other important luminaries of the Enlightenment who founded modern economics and the human 'sciences'. While the thinkers of the Enlightenment may have anticipated many of the ideas of the later German romantics and the German idealists, class-consciousness as class-consciousness is certainly not one of them. Furthermore, the notion of proletarian class-consciousness does not even emerge principally from the ideas of the French Revolution, the ideas and values of that particular historical event are declared to be bourgeois by Marx himself (he holds that these were a form of class-consciousness to be sure, but obviously not *the* universal interest that he is looking for).⁴³⁰ Rather, I shall argue that Marx's identification of the proletariat as the new messianic force of history is conditioned by the turn of Stirner, from alienation to nihilism and from collective consciousness to unique consciousness. Stirner's concept of individualism presents Marx with his greatest challenge, to come up with a universal interest, thus a non-nihilist interest, which is consonant with individuality.⁴³¹

⁴²⁸ See Eagleton, 1989, pp165-175, for an attempt to debunk the allegedly unique character of Marxism and for a discussion of the problems of identifying what essential qualities are supposed to constitute Marxism today.

⁴²⁹ As mentioned earlier [see Kamenka], Marxism is often said to be a product of French politics, English economics and German philosophy, however, it could easily be argued that German idealism itself is also a product of these same disciplines.

⁴³⁰ Marx, 1992, p147, for example, where Marx criticise the "world historical necromancers" who did not see the distinction between the events of the 1850's in France and those of 1789. The leaders of the French Revolution had, said Marx, "accomplished the task of their epoch, which was the emancipation and establishment of modern bourgeois society".

⁴³¹ Very few readings of Marx's theory of class-consciousness have been located within the historical and cultural milieu of German Idealism.

I shall further argue that the meaning of two of Marx's most important concepts, namely those of class-consciousness and revolution, are both embedded within this peculiar 'German' sense of post-historical existence, a world in which theory becomes action and reflection becomes a practical affair. I shall demonstrate that this occurs from within the framework of Hegelian idealism and the background of nihilism that we met in chapters II and III. This nihilism implied an end to 'doing philosophy' as was traditionally understood, in Stirner it meant a corporeal absolute sovereignty of the Egoists own body, philosophy which is held to be virtually synonymous with the contemplative nature of German idealism, is rejected in Marx's account. However, this produces an important paradox in Marx's project: he found that he had to resuscitate philosophy in order to end it. This paradox forced Marx to deny the meaninglessness of nihilism and re-open the discussion on alienation [Entfremdung], which is to do 'philosophy' in Marx's own terms, giving the concept of alienation his own characteristic stamp. In effect, his own account of alienation provided the 'philosophical' justification that was required by revolutionary class-consciousness, a trajectory which nihilism ruled out and which Marx had to defeat both theoretically and practically.⁴³²

As I have argued in the opening chapters, in Hegel's thought neither "alienation" understood as self-estrangement and the cloud of unknowing [Entfremdung], nor as "objectification" [Entäußerung], is coeval, with doing work *per se*. Thus while it appears that Marx's reworking of the concept of alienation is a kind of 'philosophical' project, Marx eventually abandons this project in his particular reworking of the concept. Marx's concept of alienation will only be expressed negatively in the objective relations which are defined by capitalism and the division of labour. Thus in class society no good can come of work or alienation [Entfremdung or Entäußerung], since even the benefits which may be expressed within capitalism, such as a massive upsurge in the productive forces, must always

⁴³² If it could be said that the integrity of Stirner's thought had suffered at the hands of political ideologists of every description, then this was always incomparably less so than the case of the posthumous fate of Marx's ideas. Marx, of course, has been claimed by democratic socialists, violent revolutionaries, social reformers, radical democrats, critical theorists and post-structural deconstructionists to name but a few. In addition his thought has been castigated, by turns, as a deep well of totalitarianism, as a form of hopeless utopianism, as politically naive wish fulfilment and finally, as just plain illiberal. On the other hand, the 'midterm' reports by Western scholars which were fuelled by the discovery of major works by Marx in the 1930's such as the 1844 Manuscripts, the *German Ideology* and the *Grundrisse* have led to a more objective appraisal of Marx's oeuvre. Although the plan of the *Grundrisse* suggests that Marx was planning to write extensively on matters of traditional political theory, such as the state, representative democracy and so on, there is no evidence that he intended anything other than a critique of such theory, rather than a reconstruction. All in all the accumulation of effort over the years since his death has led to the production of thousands of books and papers on his controversial ideas. It is with some intrepidity therefore, and not an insignificant amount of humility, that any contemporary scholar should proffer yet more reflections on Marx.

remain only a provisional benefit. With Marx, alienation loses the Hegelian sense of being a spiritually loaded objectification [Entäußerung], and instead it becomes a specific phenomena of a particular historical account of 'work' as a deforming self-estrangement, thus Marx re-loads suffering with new content. On the other hand, rejecting nihilism is also a recognition that it has presented itself in the first place. This implicit concern with nihilism, as a kind of shadow of alienation, does emerge and become explicit from time to time, and we will see this when we come to consider Marx's understanding of modernity in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848.

In what follows I shall try to avoid the old debates concerning Marx's Hegelian legacy. For example, according to Marx, Hegel's concept of "Absolute Knowing"⁴³³ had only foreclosed on philosophy to replace it with an idealist contemplation of the world which was essentially quietist and yet another manifestation of alienation. Thus in the famous "Postface to the Second Edition" of *Capital* of 1873, while recalling his youthful enthusiasm for Hegel he says, "With him [Hegel] it [the dialectic] is standing on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell".⁴³⁴ Following Feuerbach, Marx held that such mysticism could only be expressed conservatively because such thinking must remain apart from the practical work of "sensuous" forms of human emancipation. For Marx then, as for the other young Hegelians, Hegel was a conservative, his thought simply represented the highest philosophical expression of Prussian authoritarianism. Such charges have been answered more than adequately by a whole new generation of Hegel scholars and it is not my intention here to cover this ground again.⁴³⁵

However, more importantly, while the epistemological status of Hegel's form of phenomenological unmasking [consciousness must always examine itself], is entirely in keeping with his idealism, Marx's apparent rejection of Hegel's idealism, on the other hand, only serves to obscure the epistemological status of such practical reflexivity in Marx's own thought.⁴³⁶ As I shall demonstrate, in some

⁴³³McLellan, 1988, p102, for example, see the section "Absolute Knowing" in the 1844 manuscripts where Marx laments that this Hegelian moment "implies the transcendence of alienation".

⁴³⁴Marx, 1986, p103.

⁴³⁵For example, see Ottman, Knox, Kaufmann, Grégoire and Avineri, in Stewart (Ed), 1996.

⁴³⁶The clearest possible example of Marx's phenomenological method is to be found in the introduction to the *Grundrisse*, 1973, pp.100-108. During a long discussion of Hegel's method Marx points out that the only way to approach the study of capitalist society is to study the abstract categories that such a society uses to study itself. He points out that nothing would be more natural than to study "...the path of abstract thought, rising from the simple to the combined, [which] would correspond to the real historical process". However, because every "...abstraction ... is a product of historic relations.. these ...possess their full validity only for and within these relations". In other words, in order to get behind the back of such taken for granted categories, such abstract determinations must be examined internally in order to expose their contradictions. Thus, he continues, "The Christian religion was able to be of assistance in reaching

of Marx's most important texts there seems to be the use of a method which is conclusively idealist in this phenomenological sense. In the 1844 *Manuscripts* and the *Grundrisse*, for example, there are passages on alienation which should demonstrate beyond any doubt that this epistemological ambiguity remained with Marx well into his so-called mature period. A close reading of Vol. 1 of *Capital* before the appearance of the *Grundrisse* draws a similar conclusion based upon the notion of "commodity fetishism" which is developed in the opening chapter.⁴³⁷ In my reading of Marx, he remains an idealist in this important sense. Ultimately, for Marx as for Hegel, the course of history is a product of human consciousness.

To this end, and despite his 'heroic silence' concerning the precise nature of communist society and his rejection of a particular conception of philosophy, I shall argue that Marx was preoccupied with creating the kind of meaning which would unify the apparent subjectivity's of socially, nationally and ethnically heterogeneous people. This raises the two fundamental questions of my own reading of Marx; firstly, *what role does a critical unmasking play in the production of social meaning for Marx?* and secondly, *how does the particular process of the production of social meaning effect his theory of political change?* I shall argue that the answer to the first question lay in the need to invest a particular social agency with truly messianic potential. Like other post-historical thinkers considered here, this same messianic template produces another form of *revolutionary* politics since Marx requires a form of social and political 'activism' or decisionism from individuals in the political arena rather than the measured response of the political theorist.⁴³⁸

Particularly prominent in my account then, are those texts which demonstrate Marx's concern with the need to create a new account of the universal rather than relative interest. In his *Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, the *German Ideology* and the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx is concerned to deal

an objective understanding of earlier mythologies only when its own self-criticism had been accomplished to a certain degree,"...Marx's method, therefore, consists of studying, in the first instance, the general abstract categories of self-understanding ..."which obtain in more or less all forms of society",..then he tackles "The categories which make up the inner structure of bourgeois society and on which the fundamental classes rest"..Marx then goes on to list an enormous project of which the three volumes of *Capital* are but one fifth of the whole. The point is, Marx does not base his study on the kind of empirical abstractions dealt with in positivist sociology, for these do not determine reality- such abstractions are simplifications and do not reflect the total richness of actual experience. Marx is primarily interested in building up a rich totality of determinate abstractions, i.e. abstractions which are, never the less, real and therefore which also determine the outcome of human affairs, such as exchange value and abstract labour. In the argument that follows I will attempt to highlight this phenomenological Marx with reference to his rejection of class membership in favour of class consciousness.

⁴³⁷ Marx, 1986, pps. 435-43.

⁴³⁸ In an reminiscence of her husband's circle, Marianne Weber recalled of the young Marxist, George Lukac's, in his view, "The final struggle between God and Lucifer is still to come and depends on the decision of mankind".

with the negative epistemological effects of the disenchantment of the world and the social division of labour, effects which might well undermine the homogeneity of mankind's interpretative powers. In other words, class action *per se*, collective expressions are elevated to the realm of the 'true philosophy' i.e. it becomes the actualisation of Hegelianism.⁴³⁹ This is also related to Marx's objections to all the relativists of his own day, such as Stirner and Stirner is mercilessly savaged in Marx's polemics for this reason.⁴⁴⁰ Thus placed we are in a much better position to understand why Marx considered the nihilism of Max Stirner such a great danger. According to Marx, Stirner's messianic egoism invested nihilism with new tools, such as a startling new account of the basis and justification for the individual purpose and interest, and this in turn provided a major repulse to Marx's developing theory of communism.

Of course, the larger question remains open; did Marx correctly identify the historical agents of social change in the proletariat? While I claim that Marx held that the *potential* for revolution was inevitable, a lesser but still contentious claim than that of the so-called orthodox Marxists, for whom it was often held that proletarian revolution *per se* was inevitable. In any case, if revolution was *not* thought to be inevitable by Marx but simply one possible outcome which might emerge from specific objective historical conditions, then this simply raises an even more fundamental question concerning the imperatives of Self-Consciousness. In other words, the nature and the possibilities of his notion of a *willing* class-consciousness which is revolutionary and the project of critical unmasking becomes increasingly more vital to the practical efficacy of his project. Thankfully, questions concerning the moral or ethical requirement for revolution and the truth content of Marx's claims concerning the inevitability of revolution are too complex to be dealt with here but framing such questions in the first place does raise some related

⁴³⁹ Lukács, 1990, here I follow Lukács interpretation where he characterises his own position of "revolutionary messianism" as a "Hegelian distortion", p14, also p21, and where he says he was wrong to put the Hegelian "totality", by which he means the working class, at the centre of his system. He said "Proletarian science is revolutionary not just by virtue of its revolutionary ideas which opposes it to bourgeois society, but above all because of its method. The primacy of the category of totality is the bearer of the revolutionary principle in science", p27.

⁴⁴⁰ Marx's attitude towards Stirner is unprincipled and often Marx betrays his own deepest fears in what he does *not* say regarding Stirner. For example, he says in one passage in the German Ideology, p185, almost all of which is devoted to criticism of Stirner, that "Stirner" and his whole philosophical fraternity, among whom he is the weakest and most ignorant member, "...", thus one should consider why, if this is true, Marx spend so much time attacking him? Either way this attack does nothing to endear one to Marx, after all, if Stirner is really as ignorant then he should not have attacked from such a position of strength, or else if he is really much more interesting or challenging, then Marx should have, rather, admitted as much in honour of the truthful view of things.

issues. Again, does such a *willing* 'decisionism' takes Marx straight back into the camp of German idealism that he set out to criticise?⁴⁴¹

This question concerning the very grounding and the possibility of the project of critical unmasking, might seem at first glance to be a startlingly basic question. However, it is related to a number of such questions which are all too seldom discussed, such as the basic intentionality behind Marx's political philosophy. Of course, Marx certainly sought a communist revolution and an end to alienated relationships, but one might argue that alienation is 'normal' in the sense that Nietzsche might have meant. As we shall see in the concluding Chapter of this thesis, Nietzsche held that alienation was an inevitable part of the human condition and a necessary prerequisite of both critical thinking and great artistic achievement.⁴⁴²

In other words, assuming that one remains broadly in agreement with Marx's theory of alienation, then it is difficult to see why revolution rather than evolution should inevitably follow from his analysis, why violent destruction rather than institutional reform?⁴⁴³ The gradual reform of alienating social institutions and ways of life could just as plausibly follow from any such critical project so long as the ultimate goal remained the same i.e. the transformation of the cause of the problem, which was the capitalist mode of production. Of course, the stock reply to this last question is that Marx required the active destruction of the capitalist state which would always remain an instrument of class oppression. However, this in turn, simply begs the question of the opposing theories of universalism and the legitimisation of such theories. In other words; why we should agree with Marx's class analysis of the state rather than Hegel's?

In any case, in this chapter I am not primarily concerned with Marx's ultimate ambition for humanity. My concern in this chapter is to try and

⁴⁴¹ For such idealists the *act* of willing is the grounding of all knowledge. Most classically, such a position was developed by Fichte in his *Foundations for the Science of Knowledge*. "In his transcendental dialectic (Critique of Pure Reason), in order to decide between determination by nature and the assumption of freedom, Kant had already made an appeal to the rational interest which, no doubt, aims at freedom. Fichte turned this theoretical dispute into a fundamental decision of human existence; "What sort of philosophy one chooses depends, therefore, on what sort of man one is". An inborn interest in freedom pleads for idealism. Idealism can be compelling because of the immediate obviousness of its principle, or in other words, because it relies on the dual character of consciousness and Self-Consciousness. In everything it observes it observes itself. This is only achieved on the basis of free activity and can never be causally explained by dogmatism as brought about by things external", Rüdiger Bubner, 1997, p76.

⁴⁴² This is Walter Kaufmann's position.

⁴⁴³ Marx, 1976, p80, thus they [proletariat] find themselves directly opposed to the form in which, hitherto, the individuals, of which society consists, have given themselves collective expression, that is, the state; in order, therefore, to assert themselves as individuals, they must overthrow the state.

demonstrate the way in which he produces meaning and associated with this same primary goal how it in turn shaped the outcomes of his fragmented political theorising, such as it is. In other words, I am concerned with answers which might dislodge Marx's obvious objections to nihilism and modernity from his eschatological messianism and the self-justificatory nature of this same messianism. In short, does the messianic political form necessarily follow from his way of producing social meaning, as opposed to the kind of individualistic messianism which produced *Lumpenproletariat* for Stirner?

In the first section of this Chapter I will outline Marx's concept of praxis, and I will do this against the specifically 'German' context of his intellectual formation. Then in section two I will turn towards his important distinction between the notions of class consciousness, and class membership in order to demonstrate why the 'sociology' of empirically defined class structure does not interest Marx. Indeed, only the phenomenologically understood idealist concept of a messianic moment of Self-Consciousness as class-consciousness is of importance. Then in the third and final section I will relocate Marx's 'messianic' concept of historical agency within the Hegelian framework I introduced in the first three chapters of the present work before finally turning towards his notion of the political.

As far as Germany is concerned, the criticism of religion is essentially complete, and the criticism of religion is the presupposition of all criticism.

Marx, 1844.⁴⁴⁴

I

"Praxis" emerges from Hegelianism⁴⁴⁵

Nowhere is the peculiar German context of Marx's thought more self-evident than when it came to his appreciation of the Hegelian legacy of praxis. In Marx's understanding of Hegelianism, the most important aspect of this legacy came to him via some of the key moves in the German theology of the period, a theological crisis which systematically de-mythologized, de-sanctified, disenchanting and replaced the fundamental basis of Christian belief.

In the first instance, Marx fully agreed with Feuerbach's reversal of the subject-object predicate in Hegel's philosophy.⁴⁴⁶ As we saw in chapter three of the present work, Feuerbach proposed in his *Essence of Christianity* that although Hegel had begun to question man's alienated relation to God in earnest he had stopped short of drawing out his *Phenomenology* to its logical conclusion. For Feuerbach, this logical conclusion was that *Phenomenology*, which had proposed that 'Man was God', should actually be reversed, that is, should have proposed that 'God is Man'. God is replaced with the genus, man the 'species-being'.⁴⁴⁷ This provided Marx with one of his most formative understandings; to the effect that once God is cleared out of the way, historically speaking, then the true relation of "man to man" could be properly examined in a new, specifically modern way and that the dream of Enlightenment was realisable. In other words, this allegedly cleared the way for full and free social intercourse between persons.

⁴⁴⁴Ibid, 1976, p63.

⁴⁴⁵ There appears to be no single English equivalent for this German term, it means both experience and practice together, (applied experience) from the Greek: *praxis*, doing, action. medL: *præ'ksis*, practise, exercise. Marx uses the term on many occasions, particularly important is his use of the term in a Hegelian context such as in his *Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.

⁴⁴⁶ Marx, 1975, pps. 97 & 157, or at least it should be noted that Marx fully agreed with Feuerbach's reworking of Hegel until his confrontation with the thought of Max Stirner. Thus in the 1844 Manuscripts he has nothing but praise for Feuerbach and only one year later in the fragmentary sixth thesis on Feuerbach, and after reading Stirner, he criticises Feuerbach for the very thing he had praised him for in the first text. This was first drawn to my attention by Richard Gunn.

⁴⁴⁷ McLellan, 1988, p81.

"Criticism" before Feuerbach, lamented Marx, was continually dogged by theology, and Hegel in Marx's view, had done little in his own writings to demystify knowledge forms.⁴⁴⁸ In a very important sense, Feuerbach was true to Enlightenment in so far as he drew forth the real atheism of Enlightenment rationality in a way that the Enlightenment *philosophe* themselves had failed to do.⁴⁴⁹ In any case, Marx sought to fully develop the notion of critique as praxis, that is, as a union of theory and social action. Thus proving that he was an heir of the Enlightenment, Marx holds that a disabused notion of critique, free from religion, myth and superstition is the same thing as Reason. The point here is that this concept could only present itself after the death of God. Before the death of God, criticism was bound by theology and theology was essentially either mystical or contemplative in Marx's view.

The death of God, which I have been able to trace in general terms elsewhere [see Chapters II & III], can be more concretely drawn when we turn to the use of the term praxis by the Young Hegelian Polish nobleman, August von Cieszkowski (1814-1894). Cieszkowski was the first to use the term praxis in the distinct way which was to so influence Marx [although Hegel's use of the term *Entäußerung* in both the *Phenomenology* and in the *Philosophy of Right* is virtually identical to praxis]. If Hegel had drawn up history into three basic civilisations, the Oriental, the Classical and the Christian-Germanic, then Cieszkowski radically re-cast the formula.

In Cieszkowski's view the true triadic structure of history was Antiquity, Christianity and the Future.⁴⁵⁰ In chapter three, entitled "Teleology of World History", taken from a work which was well known to Marx, the *Prolegomena to Historiosophie*, Cieszkowski argued that just as the "world of art and immediate beauty" passes over from "classical antiquity" to the "Christian epoch" as the world of "thought, of consciousness and philosophy", so too the future would become the world of action. That is, future action would be the action of the feeling of beauty

⁴⁴⁸ In a letter to J.B. Schweitzer, 24th of January, 1865, Marx said, "Compared with Hegel, Feuerbach is extremely poor. All the same he was epoch-making after Hegel because he laid stress on certain points which were disagreeable to the Christian consciousness but important for the progress of criticism, and which Hegel had left in semi-obscurity", Marx-Engel's, *Selected Correspondence*, 1960, p185. In the Preface to his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 he said, "The first positive humanist and naturalist criticism dates from Feuerbach. The less bombastic they are, the more sure, deep, comprehensive, and lasting is the effect of Feuerbach's works, the only ones since Hegel's *Phenomenology* and *Logic* to contain a real theoretical revolution", see McLellan, p76.

⁴⁴⁹ Even David Hume, one of the most consistent of the Enlightenment atheists, was an atheist on epistemological grounds. Such arguments were very different from the ontological nature of those of Hegel and Feuerbach.

⁴⁵⁰ Here I am paraphrasing Stepelevich, 1987, p55.

[antiquity] and the wisdom [Christianity] of thought as action, i.e. praxis. In the eleventh *Thesis on Feuerbach* of 1845, Marx wrote most famously, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it". In the *Prolegomena* of 1838, only seven years before, Cieszkowski himself wrote,

...just as art still had to give way to the rising sun of thought and of philosophy as soon as it had gone beyond itself- though raised up to a higher stage- and had to exchange its former absolute value for itself for a subjection to the interiority of thought, so too must philosophy in the future suffer itself to be chiefly applied. And just as the poetry of art stepped over into the prose of thought, so must philosophy descend from the height of theory to the plane of praxis. To be practical philosophy, or (stated more properly) the philosophy of praxis, whose most concrete effect on life and social relations is the development of truth in concrete activity- this is the future of philosophy in general...

and then anticipating Marx with the following startling formulation, he continued,

...Just as thought and reflection surpassed the fine arts, so now the deed and social activity will surpass the true philosophy.⁴⁵¹

Cieszkowski then goes on to point towards Fourier's socialism,⁴⁵² as the possible beginnings of a model of what "practical philosophy" might well look like, but again, in an argument that was well rehearsed before Marx adopted it, Cieszkowski does not like the look of the utopian element in Fourier's thinking.⁴⁵³ Cieszkowski insists that "consciousness now certainly has to outpace the dead", that is, the "design of social relations" should proceed with confidence into the future and without reference to those institutions which are inherited. Only fourteen years after Cieszkowski's book Marx makes an almost identical point in the opening pages of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* when he said, "The tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the

⁴⁵¹ Ibid, 1987, p77.

⁴⁵² See Fourier, *The Theory of the Four Movements*, 1996, Fourier's early socialism is reformist and utopian, not apocalyptic. He believed, for example, that the natural order was as yet, incomplete, pxxi. Interestingly, the editors introduction concludes on the following note, "The Theory of the Four Movements is a reminder that 'socialism' began as an attempt to discover a successor, not to capitalism, but to the Christian church", pxxvi. It is also worth noting that Engels always held Fourier's thought in very high regard. See his footnote on Fourier in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, 1986, p216.

⁴⁵³ Stepelevich, 1987, p85.

living".⁴⁵⁴ Utopianism, claims Cieszkowski, is not "rational enough" in that it does not "unfold from reality" but "capitulates to a predetermined reality". In other words, a utopia by definition, closes off some of the possibilities of an infinitely open future because of its location in the temporal structure of present reality. As Cieszkowski suggests, "Just as everything new never emerges into the world all at once, so also no utopia is ever realised in the world directly".

Marx rehearsed the same arguments and arrived at similar conclusions to those of Cieszkowski. Marx's own critique of utopian thought can be found in both Vol. I of *Capital* and in the *Grundrisse*. In chapter 10 of *Capital*, entitled, "The Working Day" Marx sarcastically comments upon the factory "relay system" in which workers were quite often shuffled from job to job or even from factory to factory. According to Marx this system is as perverse a product of the bourgeois imagination as Fourier's "courtes séances". These "short sessions" were supposed to satisfy the eleventh human passion, that is, the passion for the kind of "variety" which would make work attractive in Fourier's ideal society.⁴⁵⁵ In the same chapter of *Capital*, Marx also comments upon the fact that three of Robert Owen's most cherished utopian ideals, the "ten hour day", "the combination of education with productive labour" and the "worker's co-operative societies" were, even by the time of the composition of *Capital* in 1865-7, all surpassed by historical reality, the first was a "Factory Act", the second was an "official phrase" in all Factory Acts and the last was "already being used as a cloak for reactionary swindles".⁴⁵⁶

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx covers some of the same ground but this time he explicitly relates the concept of bourgeois work to the notion of "self-realisation" which he shared with Hegel. Again, Marx criticises both Adam Smith and Fourier for their distinctive approach to the problem of increasingly unsatisfying "work", each assumes that work is a curse and each does so because they have only bourgeois expressions of work, or the "historic forms" of work in mind, as he puts it. For Smith, relief from work is to be provided by periods of "tranquillity", says Marx, thus Smith can only conceive of partial momentary freedoms *from* the "historic form" of work. Thus, according to Marx, Smith removes the pleasure of the problem-solving aspect of work from "work" *per se*.

⁴⁵⁴ Marx, 1992, p146.

⁴⁵⁵ Marx, 1986, p403.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, 1986, p413.

In Marx's view, Fourier is little better than Smith because he wants to find relief from work in the distractions of "mere fun" and "amusement".⁴⁵⁷ As opposed to the case of Fourier's utopianism, Marx argues that in a communist society the satisfactions to be gained from the new form of work would come from its usage as a form of sublimated problem solving. According to this view, self-realisation comes from the composition and solving of problems with "the most damned seriousness [and] the most intense exertion".⁴⁵⁸ In other words, Marx conceives of self-realisation *through* a quite different "work form", one which is not necessarily easy or relaxing but challenging and rational. This is an important point, Marx is required to invest the potential work form of the future with new meaning if the alienation of bourgeois societies is to be transcended [Aufheben]. Thus again, Marx follows Cieszkowski in arguing that utopians were in principle no better than bourgeois economists since they had no conception of substantive freedom unfolding from such a new "work form". This is because they, in turn, begin with the same presupposition, in effect, that work forms are a-historical.

Thus Marx looks to create social meaning from two important developments in German philosophy and both in opposition to the nihilism of modernity, both requiring a re-working of alienation [Entfremdung and Entäußerung]. Firstly, the death of God prepared the way for full and unabridged rationality in all economic, social and political matters and that same rational discourse became forward looking and grounded in social action *per se*. In other words, distance and self-estrangement between people is lost as a result of the truly common bonds and self-understandings of such collective project building. Thus work on the world, the objectification of man, is allegedly meaningful in its own right, presumably because the unmasking of particular interests which is entailed by such collective projects facilitates authentic expression rather than deceit and bad faith among and between individuals.

In Marx's on-again, off-again Hegelian idealism he ultimately returns to "absolute idealism". For example, in a very similar kind of self-objectification [Entäußerung] to that of Hegel's in the *Grundrisse*, we see a remarkably 'idealist' account of such project building and its centrality to human subjectivity and alienation [Entäußerung]. Of the part such alienation plays in the creation of a shared world, he said,

⁴⁵⁷ In the case of Fourier this claim is certainly true since an important element of his future 'harmony' was sexual liberation.

⁴⁵⁸ Marx, 1977, p611.

Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules etc. These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature. They are *organs of the human brain*, created by the human hand; the *power of knowledge objectified*.⁴⁵⁹ [my emphasis]

Secondly, Marx recognised that authentic expression, simply because it is authentic, would in all likelihood, produce a problematic heterogeneity of desires, needs and particular requirements which in there turn would make the creative satisfaction of all such wants very difficult to solve. Never the less, this only serves to bring forth the second value [hence meaning], of his new sense of social objectification; the depth satisfactions of problem solving. The exercise of technical and social ingenuity on the part of individuals becomes worthwhile and satisfying in its own right, according to Marx, when applied to serve the needs of such particularity.

Thus when we reconsider Marx's critique of Stirner's Egoism, this critique emerges most clearly when just such an extended discussion of the social basis of project building is undertaken. According to Marx, the social division of labour, which is coeval with the form of capitalist private property, is a barrier to the satisfaction of the developing multiplicity of desires because it prevents the "all-round activity and thereby the full development of all potentialities".⁴⁶⁰ Thus in opposition to Stirner, Marx wants to claim that his own commitment to the "private individual" rather than the "general", selfless man is more honest than even Stirner's egoism.⁴⁶¹ This in turn raises the whole notion of the "false form" of consciousness and the "Theory of Justification" as Marx himself calls this discussion in the *German Ideology*.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid, 1977, p706.

⁴⁶⁰ Marx, 1976, p255.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid, 1976, p247.

⁴⁶² Ibid, 1976, p242.

...“the consciousness and ability to lead this struggle exist- in objective terms- only in the class-consciousness of the proletariat, it alone can and must be the leading class of social transformation in the approaching revolution”.

Lukac's, *Lenin*.⁴⁶³

II

Class-consciousness, class-membership and praxis

Marx has little to explicitly say concerning the subjectivity of modern class relations. Where he does say something concerning class-consciousness this has often led to even greater confusion than could reasonably be expected from someone for whom the whole issue was so central. For example, when Marx discusses the “Working-Day” in Chapter 10 of *Capital* Vol. I, he suggests that the regulation of the day, “the stroke of the clock, limits, pauses of the work”, was not the product of “parliamentary fancy” (by which he presumably means self-conscious politically motivated behaviour). Rather, these regulations were “developed gradually out of the circumstances as natural laws of the modern mode of production”. At this point in his analysis of capitalism such regulation is thought to be a product of “a long struggle of the classes”.⁴⁶⁴ Thus “The establishment of a normal working-day is the result of centuries of struggle between the capitalist and the labourer”.⁴⁶⁵ And again, five chapters later, in Chapter 15 on “Machinery and Modern Industry”, he states that “Factory legislation” is a “methodical *reaction* of society against the spontaneously developed form of the process of production”. Furthermore he says that this phenomena is, “just as much the *necessary* product of modern industry as cotton yarn, self-actors, and the electric telegraph” [my emphasis].⁴⁶⁶ Thus in this somewhat determinist account society necessarily *reacts* against the drive and domination of capital. And finally, in the notoriously reductive and economistic base-superstructure footnote in Vol. I of *Capital*, where Marx quotes from his 1859 *Critique of Political Economy*, he said,

In the estimation of that paper, my view that the economic structure of society, is the real basis on which the juridical and political superstructure is raised, and to which definite social forms

⁴⁶³ Lukac's, 1970, p23.

⁴⁶⁴ Marx, 1970, p268.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, 1970, p257.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid, 1970, p451.

of thought correspond; that the mode of production determines the character of the social, political, and intellectual life generally, all this is true for our own times...⁴⁶⁷

Marx's statements here are entirely consistent with the "materialist conception of history" which he first outlined in the so-called transitional writings such as the *German Ideology*. The realities of economic life are the common basis, starting point and ground of consciousness. On the other hand, there is a huge difference between his view here and the one taken from the *Grundrisse* on the "railways" understood as actual extensions of the human brain over and against the notion that such material phenomena is that which each and every individual is in the first instance born into. In the *German Ideology* of 1845, Marx unequivocally asserts, "It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness".⁴⁶⁸

Then again, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* he says,

Men make their own history, but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted. The tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living.⁴⁶⁹

Paradoxically, such statements appear to be a complete repudiation of German Idealism. Yet returning to the historiography of Vol. I of *Capital*, Marx appears yet again to grasp the youthful idealism of the 1844 Manuscripts. This passage is of such importance that I will quote from it at length, again following a discussion of the passing of the factory acts which limited the length of the working-day in England, he said,

It must be acknowledged that our labourer comes out of the process of production other than he entered. In the market he stood as owner of the commodity "labour power" face to face with other owners of commodities, dealer against dealer. The contract by which he sold to the capitalist his labour-power proved - so to say, in black and white that he disposed of himself freely. The bargain

⁴⁶⁷Ibid, 1970, p86.

⁴⁶⁸Marx, 1976, p37.

⁴⁶⁹Marx, 1992, p146.

concluded, it is discovered that he was no "free agent", that the time for which he is free to sell labour-power is the time for which he is forced to sell it,.... For "protection" against the "serpent of their agonies", the labourers must put their heads together, and, *as a class, compel* the passing of a law, an all powerful social barrier that shall prevent the very workers from selling, by voluntary contract with capital, themselves and their families into slavery and death, [my emphasis].⁴⁷⁰

Thus again, returning to the chapter on "Machinery and Modern Industry" he again invests Self-Consciousness with the ability to make its own world from within the inventive capabilities of the imagination.⁴⁷¹ This time however, the Self-Consciousness is entirely that of the bourgeoisie. He said, "It would be possible to write quite a history of the invention, made since 1830, for the sole purpose of supplying capital with weapons against the revolts of the working-class".⁴⁷² And again, in the third thesis on Feuerbach he says,

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men...

So it appears that every actor in Marx's sociological vocabulary is an "absolute idealist" of the Hegelian variety. The proletariat revolts, then being aware of where their interests really lie, the capitalist class employ technical specialists (inventors) to help them regain control. The technical specialists devise further practical ways for the manufacturing process to assist the capitalists and thereby help themselves, and the proletariat in their turn, find new ways to regain control. In this antagonistic dance it would appear that no one is a victim of historical circumstances. Each agent is trying to re-cast historical development after their own interests. Here then, in as complete a reversal as any thinker might be thought capable of, Marx attributes the passing of the factory acts, which are nothing less than historic institutional reforms, to the effects of the class-consciousness of the workers *acting* together as a class, i.e. subjectively. In this final account the working-class drives the process of social reform and capitalist reaction, a reaction which in itself is the result of conscious action. Such a paradoxical account of consciousness, such a contradictory analysis of the objective

⁴⁷⁰ Marx, 1976, p285.

⁴⁷¹ A position followed by other 'idealist' Marxist's, see for example the famous essay by Gramsci, "The Revolution Against Capital".

⁴⁷² Marx, 1974, p411.

and subjective basis of class-consciousness, might appear to be the product of academic hair-splitting were it not for the fact that the precise philosophical status of class-consciousness is crucial to Marx's whole project and the true nature of his political philosophy.

Turning to class-membership, rather enigmatically, Marx only comes to an explicit discussion of social class as membership at the very end of the third volume of *Capital* (Chp 52), and there the manuscript tails off after only a few paragraphs. The reason for Marx's apparent disinterest in the question of class-membership becomes quite apparent in these few paragraphs. Marx points out that the "classically" determined economic structure of "modern society" is presented in the case of the three great classes of England, these are "wage-labourers", "capitalists" and "landowners". However, Marx is also well aware that even in England there are "Middle and intermediate strata", such as "physicians and officials", "owners of vineyards", "forests", "farm owners", "mine" and "fisheries" owners which "obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere". Indeed, while the class of Doctors and those of state officials might want to claim for themselves a class, Marx remarks pointedly that they both "receive their revenue from one and the same source", to describe all such professional groups and crafts as "classes" is an irrelevancy. While the existence of these intermediate strata with their individual "sources of revenue" might well yield empirical data to a sociologist of the positivist stamp, for Marx, this stratification is "immaterial for our analysis". Thus the pointless and futile exercise of trying to "identify" classes according to revenue and occupation is clear enough. Rather, class is not an empirical event, but a moving, living, process of social thinking with a "continual tendency" and a "law of development". In other words, following Hegel, Marx considers class to be a product of the historically derived modes of Self-Consciousness. This historical consciousness takes on objective form in the later writings, as it did in the passages from the *Grundrisse* which we considered, an objective form which Marx simply denies Hegel.

In any case, the law of capitalist development is well known, ever increasing amounts of labour are transformed into wage-labour and the means of production which were formerly scattered became concentrated into fewer and fewer hands, becoming divorced both from the landed class and the workers.⁴⁷³ Much of the confusion concerning the status of class in Marxology occurs because Marx only made a clear distinction between class *membership* and class *consciousness*

⁴⁷³Marx, 1984, pps. 885-6.

towards the very end of his productive life i.e. in volume III of *Capital*. Also as in the case of the base/superstructure controversy and the Preface to a *Critique of Political Economy*, he often made apparently contradictory statements in a single document.⁴⁷⁴ In any case, in the example we have just looked at from *Capital* Vol. III, we see that Marx, in failing to display any real interest in the notion of class membership and with any degree of seriousness, is making plain his real motivation, which is to define the true nature of class-consciousness not class-membership. Thus, according to Marx there are only two real classes in modern bourgeois society; the capitalist class and the working-class. Yet we are still left with the problem of beginnings: where does Marx's working-class consciousness come from if it is produced as a by-product of alienated social and economic activity which is essentially bourgeois? How is the privileged position of Marxism, as truth, even possible in the first instance?

In addition to what has been said so far and in order to understand the full significance of problems of beginnings and class-consciousness, it is necessary to return to the German context, to the death of God and the notion of praxis. In his "Introduction" *Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, (which was composed in 1844 and published in the *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher*). Following his earlier critique of Hegel's theory of the state in his essay *On the Jewish Question*, where he held that Hegel's political state emerges from an incorrectly de-politicised notion of "civil-society", Marx identifies the "proletariat" as the concrete historical agents of social change for the first time. Here a particular social agency was held to provide "material weapons" which were inherently 'philosophical', thus meaningful in some new sense. Only the proletariat could unmask the real meaning of history.

To this effect then, Marx thought German "history" analogous to the life of a "raw recruit" who has the job of "performing trivial historical drill" after everyone has left the parade ground.⁴⁷⁵ In other words, while the French had destroyed the *ancien régime* and replaced it with the alleged universalism of the emerging bourgeois, the Germans were trying to establish the former in the historical time of the latter. The "cotton kings" and "iron heroes" of Germany found expression in petty German nationalism, unlike their counterparts in France and England, who dominated society in the name of monopoly capital. Thus the real problem of German society: "the relationship of industry and the world of wealth in general to the political world" was masked behind a national "philosophy" (a philosophy of

⁴⁷⁴ Eagleton, 1989, pp 165-175.

⁴⁷⁵ McLellan, 1988, p67.

"history" i.e. Hegelianism), which was as abstract as it was impractical, a philosophy which was far removed from the basic problems of real historical development *per se*.

Marx used the phrase "the world" in the famous, *Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach*, thus it is often assumed to be a statement of universal significance. It is in this thesis, which we have already encountered, composed in April 1845, where he states that, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it". This statement has all but masked the fact that this idea is rooted in this same understanding of the specifically German milieu.⁴⁷⁶ Thus the "world" here is basically the Germanic world [Germanische Welt] of Hegel's *Introductory Lectures on World History* and of the *Philosophy of Right*. In other words, modern "Germanic" Europe only includes present day Europe. Only much later, during the analysis of colonial adventure in *Capital*, do we retrospectively understand this thesis on Feuerbach as truly universal. Thus, over one year earlier, while discussing this peculiar problem of German cultural development in the "Introduction" to his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, that is, the inability of Idealism to reform political and civil liberties and thus of coming to terms with modern industrial development, Marx first identifies his project of "changing the world" rather than merely "interpreting" it. Moving towards his definitive break with the Young Hegelians, he says in the *Critique*,

The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, supplant the criticism of weapons; material force must be overthrown by material force. But theory, too, will become material force as soon as it seizes the masses.⁴⁷⁷

According to Marx then, and following Cieszkowski, the first stage in any application of "praxis" must, in the first instance, be the recognition by philosophy of its own completion. The idea of true "criticism" without presuppositions, i.e. without prior regard to theological or metaphysical speculation, must emerge from the "brain" of the "philosopher" and become actualised. In other words, returning to the theme of the 'objective' labour of the *Grundrisse*, when "criticism" is grasped as a tool by the masses and *used by them* to critique the actual world then it becomes, not just a mode of contemplation like that of traditional philosophy, but a form of practical knowledge and a material force. In other words, real knowledge takes

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid, 1988, p158.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid, 1988, p69.

hold once the alienated "mist-enveloped regions of the religious world" have been left behind.⁴⁷⁸ The death of God is no less important for Marx than it is for Stirner or Nietzsche.

In the famous section 4 of chapter 1 of *Capital* which is devoted to the analysis of "Commodity Fetishism", Marx focuses on the clearing away of all the mystical elements which have dominated consciousness. This provides a new insight and underpins the new 'privileged standpoint', that proletarian consciousness is reified and mystified only by the appearance of the "commodity form". Marx said,

...the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things".

The implication here is, of course, that in a different kind of social arrangement the opposite would become true, that is, there would be crystal clarity in the social relationships between persons and in the material relations between things.

Thus we arrive at the real utility of "criticism". "Criticism", epistemologically speaking, is both the means to a fully rational world order, and the end result of such an order. "Criticism" is not to be understood as mere 'talk' or philosophical chit chat, but as a form of conversation which is synonymous with the actual material force and violence of the proletariat.⁴⁷⁹ This idea presupposes a non-alienated life in which individuals are able to become fully self-actualised. This self-actualisation is, however, in itself but a form of reason objectified, here again Marx is much closer to Hegel than Marx would like us to believe.⁴⁸⁰ In any case, now we see the true nature of class-consciousness in Marx's thinking: class-consciousness is a 'discursive social practice' which 'anticipates' the true appearance of social relationships between persons, thus this discursive practice, by definition, must

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid, 1988, p436.

⁴⁷⁹ Following Lukács, Gunn provides an interesting reading of praxis understood in this manner, the "modus vivendi of practically reflexive theorising is that of immanent critique", p97, and immanent critique is "unfolded in the Grundrisse and Capital of Marx", p98. Furthermore, Gunn continues, "And in case the notion of 'conversation' should seem too polite to capture the Marxist notion of class-hatred (Negri), this is to be noted: nothing is less polite than rigorous conversation pursued to its end", p105 of *Marxism and Philosophy: a critique of critical realism, Capital & Class*.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid, p102, Gunn says, "In an estranged world, where is the audience whose freedom allows it to evaluate the truth of a theorisation premised upon, and aiming towards, estrangement's critique?"

wave to one side all forms of religious, national, ethnic and other forms of self-mediations between both people and things. All such subjective forms of consciousness are wrong; they are "false forms". Such cultural mediations are a return to reification, that is, to objectify and give *independent* life to that which is very definitely a *dependent* social product. Thus, to use a favourite metaphor of the period, it is to introduce a spook or ghostly 'other' into a social practice as if it had a life of its own.

The notion of the "false form" of consciousness makes its appearance during yet another attack on Max Stirner in the *German Ideology*.⁴⁸¹ Marx, wishing to make a distinction between his own notion of the privileged position and those of the other Young Hegelians, and most importantly Stirner's claim of righteousness for the position of the Ego, Marx accuses Stirner of just such a false consciousness. Because Stirner holds that every legitimate interest is actually an individual Egoistic interest of some kind, he is forced to explain the wide perception of collective interest that pervades societies. In addition, he is also forced to explain his own privileged position and why, given the predominance of the individual self-interest, there is so little actual 'true' Egoism. As we saw in chapter 3, Stirner does this with reference to alienation's, such as religious ideologies that promote misguided notions of justice and equality. Marx, returning to the structural theme which opened the Chapter, suggests that if Stirner had only made the discovery that he had made, "that definite modes of production' are "independent" "alien practical forces" which stand over and against individuals, then he would not have sought refuge in idealist explanations which posit a spiritual alienation. Thus claims Marx, Stirner paradoxically and in a some what roundabout manner,

...admits that a definite consciousness [the regular Ego], is appropriate to definite people and definite circumstances. But at the same time he [Stirner] imagines that *his moral demand to the people - the demand that they should change their consciousness- will bring about this altered consciousness*, and in people who have changed owing to changed empirical conditions and who, of course, now also possess a different consciousness, he sees nothing but a changed consciousness.⁴⁸² [my emphasis]

⁴⁸¹ Marx, 1976, pp 242-253.

⁴⁸² Ibid, 1976, p250.

In other words, Marx claims that change is going on all the time behind Stirner's back and in the real world, as it were. However, Stirner, in Marx's view, only regards such change as a mental event. Thus in Marx's account, Stirner's real offence is to effectively separate consciousness from the individuals who are its basis and from their actual conditions so that the consciousness of the Egoist of "present day bourgeois society" does not correspond to his Egoism. In a note crossed out in a manuscript page of the *German Ideology*, Marx points out that this makes about as much sense as blaming the Greeks for not seeing themselves as we saw them, it amounts to "blaming them for being Greek". We might well ask in a similar fashion, why and how Marx can blame a bourgeois for being a bourgeois? This takes us directly back to his theory of praxis.

The reason why Marx goes to such pains to address the real nature of 'producer consciousness' in this manner is, in the first instance, to clearly delineate it from the much less interesting notion of class-membership which we already considered [above]. The problem with the concept of class-membership is obvious enough once his notion of class-consciousness has been adumbrated in the above manner. 'Class' as a genus is an essentially contestable concept which could be legitimately adapted to whatever the 'genus' under consideration might be, whether the class of patriarchy, doctors, lawyers, the class of women, the class of Albanians or whatever. In Marx's account of 'class-consciousness', class is defined by a discursive practice which is unmediated by anything 'other'. It is the total realisation of the Enlightenment vision of a culturally uncluttered, fully operational Reason. As Marx himself said, again in relation to Feuerbach,

All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.⁴⁸³

However, I deliberately used the word 'anticipates' when describing the necessary emergence of "criticism" [above] because it is not clear from what has gone before how Marx intends to break out of the problem of beginnings which he sets up in the *German Ideology*. His critique of Stirner's "Theory of [self] Justification" would appear to be just as applicable to his own project as it is to that of Stirner's. Is it also not the case that Marx wishes to bring his own privileged position to bear on the proletariat of his own day. Does his creation of social meaning in the face of modern nihilism not compel him to make a demand upon

⁴⁸³ Ibid, 1976, p157.

the working-class; that demand being, revolt, in order that by doing so they can become truly proletarian and not just the soldier ants of the modern bourgeoisie?

Marx appears to be caught in a double-bind of his own creation, if, as he maintained in the *German Ideology*, that "It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness" then it is never entirely clear how one is to break through the 'Gordian Knot' of the problem of the initiation of the Revolution by the revolutionary agency.⁴⁸⁴ In other words, how is Marx able to arrive at and sustain his own privileged position? Marx appears to require a re-energised notion of "critique" but this re-energization in turn seems to require a new notion of "critique" to begin with and this is something which can only appear in the wake of material conditions which have already presented themselves. Thus Marx has to explain the gap that has occurred between the appearance of the new industrial proletariat, his discovery of them and the failure of proletarian revolution *in his own time*. Secondly, if we assume a change in his position which we saw reflected in the *Grundrisse* and in some areas of *Capital*, in-so-far as subjectivity predominates reality, then one is compelled to inquire as to why the subjective self-understandings of the proletariat would have any need of Marx or why revolution has not occurred of its own accord?

Marx's solution to this problem is to welcome the death of philosophy and usher in the era of "praxis" which is able to legitimate the new 'privileged standpoint', not the standpoint of Hegel or of Stirner but of Marx himself. As he said in the "Introduction" to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*,

This is the question: can Germany attain to a praxis that will be equal to her principles, i.e. can she attain to revolution that will not only raise her to the official level of modern peoples but to the human level that is the immediate future of these peoples.

Due to the particular trajectory of German Idealism, the death of philosophy, traditionally understood as a form of abstract contemplation, necessarily follows hard on the heels of the death of God in this account. As Marx himself said, "The manifest proof of the radicalism of German theory and its practical energy is that it starts from the decisive and positive abolition of religion".⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁴ Marx, 1976, p37.

⁴⁸⁵ McLellan, 1988, p69

To summarise briefly, the death of God, unlike the Enlightenment, was a specifically 'Germanic' event. That is to say that following Hegel, theology was never to recover from the Young Hegelian onslaught, including that branch of rational theology which emerged from Enlightenment. Marx had to replenish "critique", he had to rescue it from its encrustation's with the 'other' of Reason. In doing so he sought to further entrench the process of Reason itself as "praxis". However, this entrenchment demanded some new notion of Reason. Again, not the Reason of the philosophers, they were simply the most abstract embodiment of an alienated consciousness.⁴⁸⁶ In a striking analogy taken from the *German Ideology*, Marx said, "Philosophy and the study of the actual world have the same relation to one another as onanism and sexual love".⁴⁸⁷ Rather, demystification and unmasking requires an unmasked and unmystified consciousness, this consciousness, in Marx's view, is proletarian 'class-consciousness' which is defined not by ever-changing forms of occupational membership but by its internal relationship to "critique" *per se*. Reason exercised as a form of social thinking expressed as a particular form of social practice was the authentic form of class-consciousness in Marx's view. This signals a return to messianism, albeit a secularised version, since only in this manner could the initiative return to the Self-Consciousness of the privileged position without giving way to the very Idealism from which Marx believed it had arose, and following Marx's critique of utopian thought, another variant of Idealism in his own time, could a theory of "praxis" avoid accusations that it was utopian. While the work of the philosopher was always 'particular', the work of a mass popular movement to end all movements carried with it the promise of the 'universal' solution to human suffering.

I would like to finish this section by returning to Lukacs, who is one of the few Marxists to emphasise this aspect of Marxism. Of the Marx-Lenin understanding of "praxis"; he says, it is not the task of a "vanguard party" to create a revolution. Lukacs says of Lenin,

... "the group of professional revolutionaries does not for one moment have the task of either 'making' the revolution, or- by their own independent, bold actions- of sweeping the inactive masses along to confront them with the revolutionary *fait accompli*. Lenin's concept of

⁴⁸⁶ Marx, 1976, p252.

⁴⁸⁷ Marx, 1976, p236.

party organisation presupposes the fact- the actuality of- the revolution".

Rather, he continues,

"The political organisation is ...conceived of as an instrument of class struggle in the revolutionary period...and the ability to foresee the impending revolution is never-the-less crucial".⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁸ Lukac's, 1970, p26 and p29.

The puppet called "historical materialism" is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is wizened and has to keep out of sight.⁴⁸⁹

Walter Benjamin

When all interior conditions are fulfilled, the day of German resurrection will be heralded by the crowing of the Gallic cock.⁴⁹⁰

Marx

III

Messianism

The 'cockcrow' of full German liberation was coeval with full human liberation and this was necessarily, in turn, a 'messianic' assertion.⁴⁹¹ In other words, it was to be an actual "resurrection". Marx's theory of class-consciousness is an excellent example of a secularised prophetic and apocalyptic form of eschatology. Marx was, first and foremost, a revolutionary, but this is hardly enough in itself to suggest that he was, as he himself was wont to deny on occasion, a "Marxist".⁴⁹² In the revolutions of 1848 which swept across Europe, the composer Richard Wagner and the anarchist Bakunin stood side by side on the barricades and the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer manned the barricades which opposed them. All three could be considered to be as revolutionaries in some sense, either literally or emblematically speaking, but none of them were "Marxists".

To be a "Marxist", like Marx, must mean at the very least that one privileges the working-class as the universal revolutionary class to be sure, but as I have demonstrated, it must also mean that the theorist of "praxis" himself enjoyed a further privileged position in the first instance.⁴⁹³ The strength of belief in the veracity of the former is wholly dependent on the unification with the self-

⁴⁸⁹ Benjamin, 1969, p253.

⁴⁹⁰ McLellan, 1988, p73.

⁴⁹¹ Dictionary of Symbols, 1996, pp209-11, like the Eagle and the Lamb, the Cock is also a symbol of Christ, emphasising his solar symbolism in the light of a new dawn and the resurrection. To Job, the Cock has the gift of foreknowledge and like the Messiah it announces that the darkness has vanished and the light has come., hence the Cock on the church steeple.

⁴⁹² Dictionary of Marxist Thought, 1988, p309, Engels once reported that Marx once said, in reference to certain phrases used by his son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, that "all I know is that I am not a Marxist", meaning possibly that he did not attempt to offer a comprehensive world view, suggests Irving Fetscher.

⁴⁹³ Eagleton, 1997, p37.

understandings of the latter. Indeed the two must become one and it was the nature of this unification of the theories of the theorist with the practice inscribed upon reality which I strongly alluded to in the last section. 'Philosophy' is dead and social practice becomes 'practical philosophy'. Thus, the redemption of humanity, which is to be a terrestrial redemption in Marx's account, is largely based upon a just settlement in this life where 'strength of belief' is a singular measure of the prospect of future deliverance from the evils of self-estrangement and where the privileged position of the 'prophet' and his followers is central. The 'prophet' must be strong, undaunted by the size of the task and must inspire with his/her calls to the faithful. It is no accident that by the time of its first English translation in 1886, Engels noted that on the Continent, *Capital* was already being described as "the bible of the working class".⁴⁹⁴

The "interior conditions" which Marx spoke of [see above] indicated that he considered that such conditions were the necessary precondition of the development of authentic class-consciousness as opposed to the 'positivist' notion of class-membership, which as I have already demonstrated, Marx decisively rejected. To be sure, class-consciousness is a by-product of Enlightenment rationality when wholly developed in a logical direction. Reason as "critique" leaves no stone unturned, it is the full depth of a socially-recognitive practice. However, the "German resurrection" still has to become a full "human resurrection". In Marx's view, the "Gallic cock" crowing was the sound of the universal principles of the French Revolution, "Equality, Fraternity and Liberty", which are as yet abstract values and are unrealised in Germany as else where.⁴⁹⁵ The "criticism of religion" and the death of God had, in Marx's view, determined that "German philosophy" as "praxis", the "weapon" of the proletariat, would provide the real means to "redemption".

Redemption from 'suffering' meant, of course, the delivery from alienated forms of life, but the disenchantment of the world, associated in Marx's mind with the diremptions of modernity, as in the case of its highest philosophical expression in the work of Stirner, only served to undermine Marx's political project. Thus in one of the most quoted passages from the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx said of modernity,

⁴⁹⁴ Marx, 1986, p112.

⁴⁹⁵ See McLellan, 1988, p71, where Marx says, "Germany is the political deficiencies of the present constituted into a world of their own and as such will not be able to overthrow specifically German barriers without overthrowing the general barriers of the political present."

All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new forms become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with *sober* senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.⁴⁹⁶ [my emphasis]

The sobering reality that Marx found in modernity was that element which represented the sheer meaninglessness of these same modern social relations, as we saw in chapter 1; this is what Hegel called utilitarianism. The 'sober' sense is a reason which is unmediated by any religious encrustation's or cultural intoxication's, a reason which is pure and unmediated. Utility is therefore viewed as a means without an end, as practicality and efficiency personified. Accordingly, the metaphor of sobriety and its opposite in intoxication, are repeatedly used by Marx when discussing both bourgeois social relations and reification. Intoxication, for its part, becomes the 'other' of reason. Contrast, for example, Marx's characterisation of the delusional need of the German upper-classes of the 1850's when they sought to emulate the opium-clad spiritualism of nineteenth century China, and its fantastic 'table turning' episodes [Stücken zu tanzen beganne],⁴⁹⁷ with the "sobering reality" which is reflected in the sterile work of bourgeois economists and arch modernists such as Cousin, Say, Constant and Guizot.⁴⁹⁸

To be sure, Marx's characterisation of modernity in the *Communist Manifesto* would appear to be a world away from his *Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach*, where as one commentator recently suggested, [Marx] .."emphasised, the collective practice of suffering and (democratic) rebellion [as] an impetus for accurate social theory".⁴⁹⁹ Yet what else is Marx describing in the passage above but the struggle of the 'privileged position' against modern nihilism, a nihilism which undermines, corrodes and destroys all attempts to set up any kind of value system, past, present or future?

In a statement which could have come from Nietzsche, Marx says, "The decomposition of the Hegelian system... began with Strauss".⁵⁰⁰ Strauss, one may recall, challenged the very divinity of Christ. The decomposition of the Hegelian system ends with the diremptions of Egoism, according to Marx. The bourgeois, in

⁴⁹⁶ McLellan, 1988, p224.

⁴⁹⁷ Marx, 1986, p164.

⁴⁹⁸ Marx, 1992, p147.

⁴⁹⁹ See Gilbert, p176, in Carver, 1996.

⁵⁰⁰ Marx 1976, p27.

this account of modernity, has no positive values, they are completely free of religious cant and hypocrisy and they simply preside over the ultimate disenchantment of the world. As he says in *Capital*, "Accumulate, accumulate! That is the Moses and the prophets", say the bourgeois.⁵⁰¹ "Accumulation" is here a value that is no value, rather it is simply a *modus operandi*. The move from the particular interests of the bourgeois Egoist to that of the universal interest of the collective, from the German followers of Hegel, and from philosophy to praxis in the "Introduction", to a *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, towards the march of the "expropriated" in Vol. I of *Capital*, is all one element of the same 'messianic' moment of Marxism.⁵⁰² I would like to summarise how this move is avoided in the thought of Hegel himself.

In Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* the motor or 'engine' of history is the nation state [das Volk als Staat].⁵⁰³ The relationships which Hegel mapped out in the *Phenomenology*, those which pass through patterns of non-recognition, misrecognition and finally full mutual, or social-recognition are also duplicated in the relations between states. Thus 'history' appears to be the "ceaseless turmoil of external contingency" in which "passions, interests, ends, talents and virtues" as well as "violence and wrongdoing" play their part in this development. The highest stage of the "dialectic ofspirit", according to Hegel's own schema is this battle or play of recognition among nations. The nation state, therefore, is the "highest power on earth". This totality of struggle, Hegel calls "World History".

While the play of forces between nations may 'appear' to be contingent because they are unpredictable expressions of a complex totality or inner play, that is, the constitutional, class and other struggles, which go on within nations in the realm of civil society, Hegel also argues in this book and in his "Introduction" to the *Lectures on World History*, that "spirit in and for itself" "prepares and works its way towards the transition to its next and higher stage". In other words, the march of Reason goes on 'behind the backs' of the individuals and processes which constitute these nations, this is the so-called "cunning of reason".⁵⁰⁴ This has been one of the most discussed and controversial aspects of Hegel's philosophy, not least because it simply begs the question of what spirit is. The further assertion that 'freedom' is "spirit in itself" is unlikely to be helpful in this regard because this would, in turn, simply beg the question of what freedom is and so on, hardly

⁵⁰¹ Marx, 1986, p742.

⁵⁰² Ibid, 1986, p929.

⁵⁰³ Hegel, 1991, p366, para 331, p371, para 340, p373, para 344.

⁵⁰⁴ Hegel, 1987, p89.

unimportant when it comes to a comparative analysis of Hegel and Marx. Although this question is one which is certainly too complex to deal with here, for present purposes the most important point is that while Hegel identifies the "Germanic Realm" as having accomplished its task, as I have already demonstrated, Marx requires further movement from this "Realm" to yet another.

For Hegel, the "turning point", from "World History" to 'post-history', or the "end of the world" as he describes it, is the self-conscious recognition of this movement [the task of the Germanic realm], a movement which revealed [or retrospectively understood] the "infinite positivity" of its own "inwardness", the "principle of the unity of divine and human nature and the reconciliation of the objective truth and freedom which have appeared within Self-Consciousness and subjectivity" said Hegel.⁵⁰⁵ This is the ultimate completion of the Adamic story which we saw Hegel outline in the first volume of his *Encyclopaedia* and which I touched upon in the opening chapters. As we also saw in chapter two, this turning point, where the "as yet abstract" truth of these principles becomes actualised is the French Revolution. As Hegel put it in the culminating paragraph of the *Philosophy of Right*, it is the moment when "the spiritual realm brings its heaven down to earth in this world".⁵⁰⁶

All of this history, all of this freedom and knowledge is poured out of time and into socially-recognitive Self-Consciousness of the state as this same absolute power which is *their* power. However, as we also saw in Chapter II, Hegel does not make the messianic move into future time because he stays with the substantive content of the meaning of "World History", which in turn, he sees in the state as "the rationality of right and law" and in the providence of Reason.⁵⁰⁷

This 'concept' is what Hegel considers a mature individuality where one expresses "abstract being-for-self" fully in thought as the "principle of rational being and knowing". Again, returning to the last paragraph of the *Philosophy of Right*, he said, "In the state, Self-Consciousness finds the actuality of its substantial knowledge...". This means then that Hegel need not find a historic agent of social change who is imbued with messianic potential, he need only find active functionaries of the process of "right and law", turning to the value-neutral "universal class", the bureaucracy of the modern state. Messianism turns, however,

⁵⁰⁵ Hegel, 1991, p379, para 358.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid, 1991, p380, para 360.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid, 1991, also p380, para 360

not upon abstract principles such as "right" and "law" but upon the premeditated prophetic activity of social agents.

In his critique of Hegel's theory of the state, of right and of law, Marx clearly rejects these principles and their claim to rationality, viewing them as an attempt to stop history and politics in 'mid-stream' as it were. Because he cannot accept the substantive content of these principles Marx must demonstrate that particular social agents are further alienated from this process and that the process itself is fundamentally flawed. Marx, like all the Young Hegelians, rouses the Hegelian dialectic of universal and particular against Hegel himself, taking the view that radical political activity is preferable to what they saw as Hegel's anti-political administrative account.⁵⁰⁸ Returning to his "Introduction" or "Critique" of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* Marx disputes Hegel's own description of the most fundamental social and political categories. Where Hegel builds a dialectic within and between the universal and the particular in the realm of the different states, within and between the private sphere of civil society and within and between the role of individuals in public life, Marx's own, sometime 'empirical', sometime 'phenomenological' analysis remains mechanically caught between civil society and the state.⁵⁰⁹

Marx's political philosophy, therefore, repudiates political theory in the Western tradition since he resuscitates alienation [Entfremdung and Entäußerung] both in 'civil society', where one would expect to find it, *and in the state*. Marx presented his 'philosophy' of praxis as a detailed class-conscious analysis of what was wrong with liberal democratic institutions together with a few scattered remarks on proletarian government which were drawn from carefully drafted historical writings such as the *Class Struggles in France* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Marx usually took either one of two views regarding the modern state. In the first case he held that a "parasite state structure" exists over and above

⁵⁰⁸ See Gilbert, "Political Philosophy: Marx and Radical Democracy", in Carver, 1996, p174.

⁵⁰⁹ Marx, 1976, p31, thus under the heading, Premises of the Materialist Conception of History, Marx said, "The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way" [my emphasis]. A few pages later he continues, "The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations. Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure of production", p35. This stands in stark contradiction to the method he outlines in his introduction to the *Grundrisse*.

society, thereby constituting a political and social alienation. Or, as in the second case, he aligns the state with a particular class oppressor.⁵¹⁰

Marx's messianic analysis forecloses on detailed political theory since all such theorising can only serve to undermine the many possible outcomes of futurity as such. This, the reader may recall, was the principal reason why Marx objected so much to the utopians of his own day. Thus reconstructing such theoretical fragments as there are demonstrates his desultory approach to theory and usually yields the view, at best, that Marx was a radical participatory democrat in the Aristotelian [*zoon politikon*] tradition.⁵¹¹ Thus Marx the democrat argued for a "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the most positive sense, that is, as an extension of radical participatory democracy against de-politicising passive forms of representative "counterrevolution". For Marx, the purpose of democratic bodies was actual governance, not simply to advise the executive, but to be both legislature and executive. Thus he said, "workers and their social allies [who] would combine legislative and executive leadership".⁵¹² Marx also sought the creation of a political community in which opposing classes were abolished and where status hierarchies faded away. "Elected leaders" were to be subject to immediate recall and were to be drawn from the ranks of the industrial proletariat. In addition to all of this Marx also held that in a communist society there would be no standing army, only a citizen militia. Finally, there is some loose evidence that suggests that he did believe in upholding juridical proceedings where these were clearly seen to be fair.⁵¹³

Never-the-less, these mildly 'liberal' political positions can hardly be described as a comprehensive and coherent attempt to theorise political institutions. Furthermore, these sporadic responses belie the importance in Marxist theory, not of his ultimate vision of communist society, which is after all, little more than impressionistic, but of his political means, that is, of his notions of "resurrection" and revolution and the role of these in his political philosophy more generally. Indeed there is a very real sense in which all such 'political theory' can be reduced, not to these relatively harmless liberal demands, but to the nature and role of process of "critique" itself. In the *German Ideology* he gave, what is perhaps his clearest explanation for his refusal to engage in detailed normative political theorising. He said,

⁵¹⁰ See Gilbert, in Carver, 1996, p178.

⁵¹¹ Ibid, 1996, for a concise version of this thesis.

⁵¹² Ibid, 1996, p189.

⁵¹³ Evidence for this final position is often largely drawn from Marx's statements regarding the work of the English factory inspectors of the nineteenth century, see Gilbert, in Carver, 1996, p189.

Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing premise.⁵¹⁴

The "now existing premise" of communism is, of course, the appearance of the proletariat on the Germanic, then the "world-historical" stage. It is somewhat apropos that this passage falls under the heading of "estrangement" in the original manuscript of the *German Ideology* for the "real movement which abolishes the present state of things" is the movement of Marx's reinvigorated concept of alienation where self-objectification is but another kind of self-estrangement when located within the capitalist relations of production. To be sure, as Marx was to concede in his later years, the communist revolution might well be attempted by peaceful means, at least in England, where the proletarian consciousness is most highly developed. However, as Engels maintained in the preface to the first English translation of *Capital*,

He [Marx] never forgot to add that he hardly expected the English ruling classes to submit, without a "pro-slavery rebellion", to this peaceful and legal revolution.⁵¹⁵

Thus "communism" is not an end-state but the process of critical self-alienation which gives meaning to the suffering which is inscribed in capitalist social relations. The alternative is to suggest that the suffering of individuals is without meaning, the position taken by Stirner, something which Marx could not accept. In any case, alienation is the interpretative process which allows the theoretical separation of the "real movement", or true class consciousness from the "false" form of consciousness. Thus critically driven alienation prudentially struggles against philosophical and ethical nihilism.

However, this process of self-legitimacy would appear to be, like the Stirnerian conception of messianic Egoism which was so heavily criticised by Marx, a tautology. Why should we be convinced by the correctness of the process if it is tautological? The 'process' is the final identification of alienation with the

⁵¹⁴Marx, 1976, p49.

⁵¹⁵Marx, 1974, p17.

privileged standpoint [the unmask-er], where one is then able to spot "bourgeois relations" being "quietly smuggled in as the inviolable natural laws on which society in the abstract is founded".⁵¹⁶ Revolution [or as Engels might have it, at best, a civil war, which may amount to the same thing], therefore, which is both unavoidable and inevitable in this account, is nothing less than the decisionist arm of the privileged standpoint itself. In short, communism *is* meaning.

In this messianic account, actions once enacted, once temporalized, have meaning precisely because that is what action means. Revolution, therefore, and in quite the same manner, has meaning because it is revolution. In other words, the historical presence of revolution is the alpha and the omega of the explanation. This is why Marx says in the *Class Struggles in France*, that "Revolutions are the locomotives of history".⁵¹⁷ In the *Class Struggles in France*, it is not a particular hour, or even a given day which is held to contain the revolutionary moment but the whole period from 1848 through to 1850. The "train of the revolution"⁵¹⁸ consists in the "vortex of events" and in the "torment of historical unrest", the revolution resides in the hearts and breasts of individuals who are full of "revolutionary passions, hopes and disappointments"⁵¹⁹ and a generalised "revolutionary fever".⁵²⁰ The ultimate legitimising component of praxis, is the ever present phenomenon of revolutionary crisis, which may ebb and flow, but never fully disappears from the advanced political, social and cultural horizons of the class consciousness of the 'privileged standpoint' itself.

Again, to finish on Lukac's, who said,

"The actuality of the revolution: this is the core of Lenin's thought and his decisive link with Marx".⁵²¹

Marx was stalked by the nihilism of modernity, by the social diremptions of the division of labour and by the sterile utilitarianism of the modern market economy. A specifically modern process, the free market swept away all traditional forms of culture, values and religion and was no more kind to new forms of self-understanding than the old. Marx had to find some way to resuscitate what he saw as a moribund and stagnating discourse of social and political liberation. Hegel

⁵¹⁶ Marx, 1973, p87.

⁵¹⁷ Marx, 1992, p117.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid, 1992, p111.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid, 1992, p91.

⁵²⁰ Ibid, 1992, p92.

⁵²¹ Lukac's, 1971, p11.

had, according to Marx's account, correctly mapped out the importance of freedom and self-actualisation but he had also failed to correctly identify the universal agency of modern social change in the proletariat.

The principles of the French Revolution imploded in the events of the "Terror" and in the apparent meaninglessness of both life and death displayed there. Marx was required then, to find new meaning for a new historic teleology and thereby underpin the continuation of economic, social and political struggle. His chosen political agency, the emerging proletariat, had to share his own self-understanding that self-actualisation was both within their grasp and something worth struggling for.

However, this raised an important 'philosophical' problem: how could the privileged position of the theorist, his 'truth' and the 'truth' of the universality of the proletariat be a) explained and b) become politically legitimated? Marx's solution to the first problem was to seek refuge, despite scattered references to his "empirical" epistemology, in German Idealism and in the practical-reflexivity of consciousness. In other words, his 'truth' was to be explained messianically. His solution to the second problem, that of legitimisation, was much more difficult. Marx had to simultaneously denude the traditional conception of philosophy, thereby avoiding any notion that his own 'philosophy' was contemplative or solipsistic if he was to further the cause of political action. His solution to this problem was to advance a messianic political form which was so naturally a part of the Young Hegelian milieu from which he himself emerged. Such a messianism would enable him to legitimate political action, from an idealist standpoint without committing him to getting down to normative political detail. Thus he could avoid being tainted by liberal institutions and structures as far as was possible. His concept of political action, therefore, had to be consistent with his messianic idealism, in other words, it had to be revolutionary. In this way Marx hoped to unite the historic epochal social change that was required with the philosophy of the 'privileged standpoint' itself, and with the self-understandings of the proletarian class consciousness: this was to be praxis, the "true philosophy".

In Marx's vision of post-historical existence the meaning of, what remained for Hegel vestigial elements, i.e. unemployment, poverty, disease, wars and other sufferings, such as the unwelcome trappings of social madness and the socio-pathologies of market relationships, become for Marx, a powerful indictment of

German society *per se*.⁵²² Only by swapping away the entire edifice could a much reduced concept of philosophy, as “revolution”, as “historical locomotive”, be demonstrated. Revolutionary theory begets the long revolution. To achieve this however, required considerable sacrifice, and sacrifice presupposes deeper meaning. In the *Class Struggles in France* Marx said,

The worker's task will begin to be accomplished only when the world war carries the proletariat to the fore in the nation that dominates the world market, i.e. England. The revolution which here finds not its end [in France] but its organisational beginning is no short winded revolution. The present generation is like the Jews, whom Moses led through the wilderness. They not only have a world to conquer; they must perish in order to make room for the men who are equal to a new world.⁵²³

⁵²² Marx's rejection of traditional approaches to political theory cannot simply be reduced to his critique of Hegel's concept of civil society, since this critique itself must come from some other notion of 'real' identity between social subjects and the true universal interest. Thus even this critique of 'political economy', of a disguised social form, relies in the first instance upon some account of a more advanced self-consciousness of some kind.

⁵²³ Marx, 1992, p112.

The degree and kind of a man's sexuality reaches up into the topmost summit of his spirit.

Nietzsche, 1886⁵²⁴

CHAPTER V

Post-Historical Existence III: The *Übermensch*

Introduction

The New Nietzsche⁵²⁵

My task in what follows is to demonstrate why a "psycho-analytic" understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy is not inconsistent or incompatible with his extreme and messianic style of politics but rather, can give us new insight into these overt political statements.⁵²⁶ Of course this already anticipates that which I will set out to demonstrate: that a "psycho-analytic" reading should be preferred over many other interpretations. Secondly, this also assumes that Nietzsche's political thought was, in some sense, messianic.⁵²⁷ In the course of this chapter I shall discuss both of these questions.

It is generally well known that Nietzsche's most basic ideas were greatly influenced by Schopenhauer's philosophy.⁵²⁸ It is also a commonplace of Nietzsche studies to assert that Nietzsche was also an implacable anti-Hegelian and that, rather neatly, these two seminal influences were diametrically opposed to one another in straight forward historical terms.⁵²⁹ In other words, Nietzsche the

⁵²⁴ Nietzsche, 1990, p 92. Compare this with Schopenhauer, 1969, p329, "The sexual impulse is proved to be the decided and strongest affirmation of life by the fact that for man in the natural state, as for the animal, it is his life's final end and highest goal".

⁵²⁵ This is also the title of one recent study of Nietzsche which flows from the Heideggerian reading of Nietzsche as philologist, see Allison (Ed), MIT, 1988.

⁵²⁶ The most sophisticated and comprehensive of these recent "psycho-analytic" re-readings of Nietzsche is Staten, 1990.

⁵²⁷ Staten, 1990, p5, it is also worth pointing out that Staten himself, takes the view that Nietzsche believed himself to be some kind of prophet, although he never fully develops this theme. He says, "Nietzsche addresses a future that he believes will be able to hear him as his own time cannot; and we are that future".

⁵²⁸ Nietzsche, 1993, pps, 16-18, for example, in the opening few pages of his *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's starting point is the similarity between Schopenhauer's *principium indivisuationis*, and his notion of the Dionysiac. These concepts are supposed to describe the undifferentiated mass of energy, whether malign or benevolent, which forms the fundamental basis of everything.

⁵²⁹ Nietzsche, 1989, p114, see Nietzsche's own direct comparison of the significance of Hegel and Schopenhauer for the Germans,.

Schopenhauerean had set himself up against Hegel as Schopenhauer himself had done.⁵³⁰ While this is certainly the case, I will also argue in what follows that Nietzsche's 'Schopenhauerean' political philosophy balks at the prospect of traditional political theory precisely because of its historic complicity with nihilism.

While Nietzsche's political philosophy is able to provide him with a measure or standard of meaning, political theory *in his own era*, is only ever understood by him in eschatological terms.⁵³¹ Thus Nietzsche conflates the *decadence* of his own day with that of all political theory. Despite his abhorrence of Hegel and the Germans he remained locked into the most forceful product of Young Hegelianism, its attack upon Christianity. Finally, in his blanket acceptance and then eventual rejection of nihilism in favour of his denuded slant on Schopenhauerean metaphysics, Nietzsche is forced, following Stirner and Marx and in keeping with the eschatology of his own milieu, to reject political theory in favour of prophetic politics.

The principal Schopenhauerean ideas which Nietzsche incorporated into his own political philosophy can be summarised as follows: 1) Nietzsche accepted Schopenhauer's description of the underlying reality of everything as a kind of undifferentiated energy,⁵³² 2) Nietzsche also accepted that the real reasons and motivations for our actions and beliefs are often hidden from us,⁵³³ and finally, 3) although in his early writings he appears to accept Schopenhauer's pessimism, that this so-called energy or "Will" is essentially malign, in his mature work he is much more sanguine. In what follows I will assume that points one and two are relatively non-controversial, and instead I would like to concentrate on point three, the 'sexual' and much more optimistic reading of Nietzsche's understanding of the Schopenhauerean "Will".⁵³⁴

⁵³⁰Schopenhauer, 1969, pxxi, referred to Hegel as an "intellectual Caliban", i.e. a person of low character, a "degraded and bestial" character, from Shakespeare's, *The Tempest*.

⁵³¹ Meaning that Hegel's political philosophy is simply one of a number of manifestations of *decadence*, according to Nietzsche.

⁵³²Schopenhauer, 1969, pps. 100, 125 and 162, although in Nietzsche's mature thought he moves away from this notion of the "will" as a kind of cosmology. Eventually he appears to take the view that the "will to power" is a kind of differentiated second-order psychological drive.

⁵³³Schopenhauer, 1958, ppp 195, 197, 208-10, 217-18.

⁵³⁴ Consider the following passage from Schopenhauer's, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1966, p533-34, the "sexual impulse" says Schopenhauer is ... "the ultimate goal of almost all human effort; it has an unfavourable influence on the most important affairs, interrupts every hour the most serious occupations, and sometimes perplexes for a while even the greatest minds. It does not hesitate to intrude with its trash, and to interfere with the negotiations of statesmen and the investigations of the learned. It knows how to slip its love-notes and ringlets even into ministerial portfolios and philosophical manuscripts. Every day it brews and hatches the worst and most perplexing quarrels and disputes, destroys the most valuable relationships, and breaks the strongest bonds. It demands the sacrifice of life and health, sometimes of wealth, position, and happiness. Indeed, it robs of all conscience those who

Nietzsche's thought is replete with discussions, comments, and aphorisms on sex, sexuality and sensuality. Yet until relatively recently this concern with sexual matters was largely uncharted terrain. Of course, it has always been known by some of his more astute followers that Nietzsche was interested in the role of sex in human affairs and psychologists such as Freud and Jung grudgingly admitted a debt to Nietzsche.⁵³⁵ However, this exegetical imbalance has changed since both contemporary feminists, Deconstructionists and a recent influential book by Henry Staten suggested that Nietzsche's concern with sexuality was not a mere epiphenomenon of his philosophy of power but fundamental to his whole approach. In what follows I favour the view, principally Henry Staten's, that Nietzsche's political philosophy is understood against the backdrop of his "general economics".⁵³⁶

On the face of it, there would appear to be more consensus on the nature of Nietzsche's political opinions than on any other area of his thought but this appearance is deceptive. It seems quite apparent, for example, that Nietzsche had little time for liberalism,⁵³⁷ socialism⁵³⁸ or conservatism.⁵³⁹ It is quite clear that he

were previously honourable and upright, and makes traitors of those who have hitherto been loyal and faithful".

⁵³⁵ According to Donn, 1988, pps. 50-51, Jung deliberately avoided reading Nietzsche in his youth because he knew that his own views were very close to those of Nietzsche's and in the case of Freud, he emphatically said again and again that he had not read Nietzsche. However, as Donn points out, the work of Nietzsche was often the topic of discussion at early psychoanalytic gatherings.

⁵³⁶ Here I use the term "general economics" in this same Freud-Bataille sense, to convey the fact that, as Bataille himself said, "Human activity is not entirely reducible to processes of production and conservation, and consumption must be divided into two distinct parts. The first, reducible part is represented by the use of the minimum necessary for the conservation of life and the continuation of individuals' productive activity in a given society; it is therefore a question simply of the fundamental condition of productive activity. The second part is represented by so-called unproductive expenditures: luxury, mourning, war, cults, the construction of sumptuary monuments, games, spectacles, arts, perverse sexual activity (i.e. deflected from genital finality)", Bataille, 1991, p118. Following Freud, Bataille refers to these latter phenomena as the "Principle of loss". See also Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1961, p14. It should also be noted that Nietzsche's ontological presuppositions are derived from Schopenhauer, not Hegel, thus the concern with the unconscious and the Dionysian, begins with Schopenhauer. Never-the-less, in what follows I shall argue that Nietzsche took Hegelian Spirit to be the ultimate standpoint of modern nihilism. In other words, what ever reservations Nietzsche may have held in his later life regarding Schopenhauer's "nay saying" his ontological framework remained broadly Schopenhauerian whereas his hostility to Hegel and Hegelianism was implacable. Finally, my reading is to be distinguished from Staten's in-so-far as he goes much further towards actually psychoanalysing Nietzsche the man and writer, whereas I only attempt to understand Nietzsche's application of what might be termed his 'general economics'.

⁵³⁷ Nietzsche, 1968, p82 for a typical critique of liberalism's attempt to delineate tolerance and intolerance.

⁵³⁸ Nietzsche, 1989, aphorism 285, on socialism and the distribution of property.

⁵³⁹ Nietzsche, 1992, p82, where Nietzsche describes his task in *Beyond Good and Evil* as a critique of modernity, "not excluding modern politics". Also in *Twilight of the Idols*, 1968, pps.96-7, Nietzsche takes issue with the conservatives for trying to dam up *decadence*, which can only serve, in his view, to make its final degeneration "more sudden".

considered the self-division of Europe into nation states a disaster,⁵⁴⁰ and nationalism the most odious of all ideologies.⁵⁴¹ It also seems clear that Nietzsche felt that the state was the most dangerous of modern developments,⁵⁴² he had little sympathy with representative democracy⁵⁴³ and he was genuinely appalled by anti-Semitism, and especially the German variant.⁵⁴⁴ Nietzsche had little affinity with those who sought the "emancipation of women"⁵⁴⁵ and he felt that modern bureaucratic and industrial⁵⁴⁶ life was cramping the true realisation of what he considered to be life-affirming values.⁵⁴⁷

In his Geo-political views, Nietzsche seemed to consider "free emigration" by Europeans and the working-class, in particular, as some kind of world-historical release valve,⁵⁴⁸ and his greatest fears appear to have come from the direction of Russia and Asia.⁵⁴⁹ Clearly then, given such views, Nietzsche's political thought does *not* fit comfortably within any contemporary notion of 'left' or 'right'. Furthermore, although there is a measure of agreement that these were the views that Nietzsche held there is still virtually no agreement as to why he held such views, or how such disparate opinions could hold together, if at all, hence the widely held perception that he was an irrationalist.

It might appear strange to contemporary ears that there might be a 'psycho-sexual' reason for fearing Russia or for justifying a more commanding role in international affairs for Germany or for the USA? Or that one could find a justification for the political map of a new Europe, in a theory of sex? This is perhaps a reflection of the extent to which we have forgotten Freud's central message in his classic monograph *Civilisation and Its Discontents* no less than the extent to which we have been unable to understand Nietzsche. Freud held in that essay that the more we 'civilise' the more we repress and the more we repress the more neurosis we encounter. Furthermore, it might also be strange to think that we might possibly think through new political institutions for an nihilist age, given

⁵⁴⁰Nietzsche, 1984, aphorism, 475.

⁵⁴¹ See *Beyond Good and Evil*, aphorism 251, against nationalism. Also *Twilight of the Idols*, 1968, p60, "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles was, I fear, the end of German philosophy"...

⁵⁴²Nietzsche, 1969, p75, "The state is the coldest of all cold monsters". See also, *Daybreak*, 1989, aphorism, 179, where he argues that politics, economics and the public scrutiny involved in such matters is a dreadful waste of the most gifted spirits.

⁵⁴³Nietzsche, 1989, aphorisms 289 and 292.

⁵⁴⁴Nietzsche, 1990, aphorism 251, where he says, for example, "perhaps it would be a good idea to eject the anti-Semitic ranters from the country".

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid, 1990, aphorism 239.

⁵⁴⁶Nietzsche, 1989, aphorism 288, on the machine for example.

⁵⁴⁷ *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, aphorism 47.

⁵⁴⁸ See Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 1989, aphorism 206.

⁵⁴⁹ Nietzsche, 1984, aphorism 475.

the essentially confusing use of this term, no less than what relation this alleged nihilism might well bear towards a theory of sexuality?⁵⁵⁰ I will suggest that Nietzsche certainly believed that there was a relation between individual and collective sexual energies and politics and one which he consistently adhered to, despite the fact that his politics have all too often been written off as 'Russophobic', irrational or more importantly, as simply incidental to his philosophy of power.⁵⁵¹

In the Introduction I will outline some of the influential early readings of Nietzsche before moving onto a more detailed discussion in section I of some of the more recent interpretations of politics in Nietzsche's thought. In Section II I will describe Nietzsche's discourse of libidinal "general economics",⁵⁵² and finally, in Section II I will assess some of Nietzsche's more important political statements with regard to his understanding of nihilism and his description of modernity, and in this final section I will justify my own reading. I will agree with some of the dominant scholarly readings which suggest that Nietzsche required of politics that they become subordinated to the personal uses of abundant and bounteous spirits. However, it will also be seen that the framework of "libidinal" power which Nietzsche used to identify such spirits, such "creators of value" is also extended into his analysis of politics more generally.⁵⁵³ With good reason then, Nietzsche could say of himself that he was an "unavoidable psychologist"⁵⁵⁴ since his notion of power could only be read through his depth psychology.

Nietzsche adopted the politics of eschatological prophecy because these were the required mode for the nihilist condition. We are not supposed to extrapolate from Nietzsche's messianic tone to his normative political thought of course, we should not take him too literally since the *Übermensch* does not provide an account of an actual historical agency in the same sense as Stirner's *lumpenproletariat*

⁵⁵⁰ See Freud, 1975, p25, for example, where he says, "The history of human civilisation shows beyond any doubt that there is an intimate connection between cruelty and the sexual instinct; but nothing has been done towards explaining the connection, apart from laying emphasis on the aggressive factor in the libido".

⁵⁵¹ This last position, that Nietzsche's overt political statements are simply incidental and of not to be seriously considered was first proposed in T. B. Strong's influential study, see Strong, 1988, p189.

⁵⁵² Freud, 1989, p28, principally uses the term "economics of the libido" to refer to the general economy of expenditure.

⁵⁵³ see Freud, 1975, p83, for a clear exposition of libido theory. Freud says, "We have defined the concept of libido as a quantitatively variable force which could serve as a measure of processes and transformations occurring in the field of sexual excitation". Also, note that Freud ultimately held that "sexual excitation" began with, if not determined by, a chemical process, thus he says, "The neuroses which can be derived only from disturbances of sexual life, show the greatest clinical similarity to the phenomena of intoxication and abstinence that arise from the habitual use of toxic, pleasure-producing substances", p82. This analysis closely follows Nietzsche's genealogy of master and slave economies, including the ascetic, in his *On the Genealogy of Morality*.

⁵⁵⁴ Nietzsche, 1990, aphorism 289.

or Marx's *proletariat*. However, Nietzsche does require some agency of historical legitimisation which will work within his sexual archetypes and the related analysis of *decadence*.

I shall follow those who argue that while Nietzsche's admiration for the cool calculative 'pathological' types such as Cesare Borgia, "a predatory beast",⁵⁵⁵ and Napoleon Bonaparte, a man of "inexhaustible fertility",⁵⁵⁶ was obvious, in his view the success of such men was becoming impossible in the 'democratic age'. It is worth noting that each of these leaders was a master of pragmatic state-craft, each subordinated the welfare of others to their own ends, each enjoyed a superabundance of sexual energy and each rose from social chaos and imposed form upon man and society, the Apolline over the Dionysiac.⁵⁵⁷ In other words, the point is not to write Nietzsche's political analysis off as embarrassing but to understand the role such politics and typologies were to play, according to his own understanding, and given the alleged crisis of nihilism. We are then able, therefore, to read back into his nihilism from his political philosophy.

In a recent short introductory survey of Nietzsche's ideas and their impact upon modern European thought, Michael Tanner has pointed out that Nietzsche has provided inspiration for an "astonishingly discrepant" and divergent group of people. Everyone from "anarchists, feminists, Nazis, religious cultists, Socialists, Marxists, vegetarians, avant-garde artists", to "devotees of physical culture and arch-conservatives", all have sought inspiration in Nietzsche.⁵⁵⁸ Tanner then goes on to assess the impact of Walter Kaufmann's post-war interpretation upon Nietzsche studies in America. Kaufmann, argues Tanner, sought to distance Nietzsche's ideas from all political strains of interpretation, and from the Nazi appropriation in particular. However, in order to achieve this he, in effect, produced an anti-political Nietzsche who was part of the mainstream of the Western cannon, in other words, Kaufmann produced a "rationalist" Nietzsche who was concerned with issues of "objectivity, the nature of truth, and other harmless topics", says Tanner.⁵⁵⁹ Thus within the exclusionary agenda of a rationalist project such as this there could be no room for seemingly irrational politics, so these were put down to certain cultural 'pre-occupations' of the period,

⁵⁵⁵Ibid, 1990, aphorism 197.

⁵⁵⁶Nietzsche, 1968, p19.

⁵⁵⁷ For a detailed account of Napoleon's apparent sexual energy for example, see Kemble, 1959. For a short aphorism on the relationship between the Apollinian and the Dionysian see *Twilight of the Idols*, 1968, p73.

⁵⁵⁸ See Tanner, 1994, p1, where he quotes from a recent study by Ascheim, 1992.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, 1994, p2.

that is, to a climate of German irrationalism which began with Schopenhauer. This view then, in Tanner's account, and rather ironically since Kaufmann wanted to provide a corrective to the Nazi appropriation of Nietzsche in the first place, simply does yet more interpretative violence to Nietzsche's political positions.

In post-1945 Europe, Nietzsche studies took a somewhat different turn, inspiring, existentialists, phenomenologists, and finally critical theorists, post-structuralists and Deconstructionists. The total effect of all of this has been, yet again, to disregard Nietzsche's political statements as ill-informed and embarrassing or just to ignore them altogether, taking the view that the very limited value of such political statements should be contrasted against the great *therapeutic* or existentialist potential of his philosophy as a whole. In short, most of the post-war Nietzsche literature has been either a reaction to some previous political appropriation of Nietzsche's thought, as in the Nazi case, or a reading which was clearly ideological in some other direction, as was the case with many of the French readings, which were often little more than an attempt to deal with the absence of a 'left-alternative' to the French Communist Party.

For reasons of historical 'objectivity' then, the first section of the present account will concentrate on recent scholarly readings of Nietzsche's politics which are less 'reactionary' in the above sense, I will principally engage with more recent attempts to deal with Nietzsche's politics among the mainstream academic communities in England and America. In the course of which I will reject the existentialist and self-actualising accounts of Nietzsche's thought, and here I am in agreement with Ansell-Pearson,⁵⁶⁰ I will eventually return to the sense of urgency, the shrill and apocalyptic⁵⁶¹ tone which Nietzsche adopts as his key mode of literary presentation with regard to political matters.

While attempting to avoid the anodyne readings so frowned upon by Tanner I will demonstrate that Nietzsche's politics were quite in keeping with the Young Hegelian progenitors from which he himself came.⁵⁶² Nietzsche's politics

⁵⁶⁰ Ansell-Pearson, 1995, p. ix.

⁵⁶¹ Nietzsche, 1992, p. 97, "apocalyptic" is surely not too strong a word to use with regard to Nietzsche, take the following for example, "...when truth (i.e. Nietzsche) steps into battle with the lie of millennia we shall have convulsions, an earthquake spasm, a transposition of valley and mountain such as has never been dreamed of".

⁵⁶² Here I follow Staten, 1990, p. 3, characterising some of the more dismissive works of recent Nietzsche scholarship, he eventually turns to Richard Schacht, saying, "The 'frequent rhetorical excesses' and 'ill-considered shots...at various targets' which Richard Schacht dismisses as 'so much unfortunate static' are integral parts of the movement of Nietzsche's writing. To subtract them is to subtract Nietzsche's signature from his text, to be left with an anonymous patchwork of 'views'".

were certainly a product of his cultural milieu but not in the manner suggested by Kaufmann. For example, despite Kaufmann's sensitive treatment of the German term *Übermensch*, he settles upon the view that this term, above all else, is an existential concept.⁵⁶³ Thus according to Kaufmann's "Nietzsche", the value of an Napoleon to the world lay in Napoleon's own goal-realisation or self-worth and not in his value or significance to society as a whole. In Kaufmann's reading of Nietzsche, even Napoleon is de-politicised, for the argumentative thrust here is that Napoleon was 'his own man', the perfect model of self-control.⁵⁶⁴ It is with good reason then, that Kaufmann refers to his modern stoical Nietzsche as the "Protestant Nietzsche".⁵⁶⁵ There are passages which appear to support Kaufmann's reading but these are only supportive of his view if read within the bourgeois context which Nietzsche himself decisively rejected.⁵⁶⁶

Such confusion concerning Nietzsche's political intentions can, no doubt, be related to the hyperbolic and apparently manic delivery of his writings. Yet I will hold that Nietzsche did require that in an age of nihilism nothing short of a super-human agency, an explosive personality, only one who was "dynamite" could save cultural man and man as such. In Nietzsche's view only men such as Cesare Borgia and Napoleon Bonaparte had the capacity for great deeds.⁵⁶⁷ Nietzsche did believe that only an earthly prophet, one who was filled with "promise" and was not afraid to say so (see below), and one who could struggle against all the odds could save man properly so-called.⁵⁶⁸ It was certainly the case that for many young Germans, and this is also part of the Nietzschean legacy, that this 'struggle' was often understood to necessitate either that some kind of social cleansing or an act of spiritual 'hygiene' such as war and imperialist war at that, would ultimately be required if true health was to be re-obtained.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶³ See Kaufmann, 1974, p309.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, 1974, pps. 314-15.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid, 1974, p412.

⁵⁶⁶ For example, see Daybreak, 1989, p107, *As little state as possible*, where Nietzsche said, "Political and economic affairs are not worthy of being the enforced concern of society's most gifted spirits: such a wasteful spirit is at bottom worse than having none at all". However, if one reads on it becomes quite clear that such an wasteful expenditure of energy is, in Nietzsche's account a product of bourgeois society, with its "workshops", "machinery" and "universal security", the later being the growth in the bureaucratic welfare state.

⁵⁶⁷ Nietzsche, 1992, p96, "I am not a man, I am dynamite".

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid, 1992, p96, although he has no desire to be "a founder of religion".

⁵⁶⁹ For example, well before the German events of 1933, the young German intellectual Karl Löwith could recall how he volunteered to join the German infantry in October 1914 after having immersed himself in Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche, he re-called, amplified his "yearning to escape bourgeois narrowness" and instilled in him the passion to 'live dangerously'. In this sense then, Löwith was certainly correct in his estimation of the urgency in Nietzsche's voice, in his 'explosive' political views because such urgency was not a mere rhetorical device, it was a desperate medicine for what he clearly perceived, rightly or wrongly, to be a desperate illness. On the other hand, despite the tendency towards war on the

Of course, an equally important question mark might well be held against Nietzsche's 'psycho-sexual politics', and particularly from a traditional Enlightenment and liberal standpoint. For example, the view that Reason is immanent in history would, if successfully sustained, would do much to reduce Nietzsche's political views to the ramblings of self-induced sexual pathology. From such a perspective Nietzsche's 'cure', i.e. psycho-sexual release, might appear to be worse than the disease, i.e. the notion of *decadence*.⁵⁷⁰ However, it could be that the value in taking Nietzsche at his word does not come from sanitising his politics for the twentieth century audience or in disregarding these same politics, it might well come from the full historical specificity of Nietzsche's project, freeing us, as it must, from at least one important obligation; to accept that his thought is also a thought for our own times. In other words, such an approach may free us from the Young Hegelian and modernist conception of freedom, which allegedly devalues itself. We can, in fact, free our own thought from yet another ill-conceived, if admittedly exciting, eschatological project.

part of Nietzsche's chosen heroes, one should not hold, as the young Löwith did, hold that Nietzsche eulogised war for the sake of war, see Löwith, 1986, p1.

⁵⁷⁰ Note that in Nietzsche's demonology nihilism is synonymous with *decadence*.

Listen to me! for I am thus and thus. Do not, above all, confound
me with what I am not

Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*⁵⁷¹

What defines me, what sets me apart from all the rest of mankind,
is that I have unmasked Christian morality

Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*⁵⁷²

I

Anti-politics?

Nietzsche, of course, was *not* the first to unmask Christian morality, he followed in a long line of post-Hegelian thinkers who vigorously attacked and unmasked Christianity. A role call of the most effective would have to include Strauss, Feuerbach, Stirner and Marx. However, Nietzsche may well have been the most effective and consistently trenchant critic of Christianity and the self-belief that he was the most successful is still to be viewed with some sympathetic indulgence. More importantly, according to Nietzsche, modern politics are the legacy of Christian values, thus the criticism of Christianity is also a critique of political theory *per se*.

Of the many recent studies of Nietzsche's political thought, three have become standards in their own right and all either attempt to make Nietzsche's political views more palatable or they ignore them altogether.⁵⁷³ These are as follows; first, there is the groundbreaking study by Tracy B. Strong, entitled *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, then came *Nietzsche and Political Thought* by Mark Warren, then thirdly, and most recently, Daniel W. Conway turned to Nietzsche's politics in his *Nietzsche & the political*. In addition to these studies, Kieth Ansell-Pearson, has selected, edited and introduced a collection of Nietzsche's political writings, including his *On the Genealogy of Morality*, for the

⁵⁷¹Nietzsche, 1992, p3.

⁵⁷²Ibid, 1992, p101.

⁵⁷³ In addition to these there is also a re-reading of Nietzsche's politics by contemporary feminists which is collected together and provided by Paul Patton (Ed), in his *Nietzsche, Feminism & Political Theory*. However, although there is no single approach in this volume most of this work can be located within the Heideggerean reading in some sense. Most of the readings are concerned with Nietzsche the 'philologist' or the de-constructionist, these seek to develop a politics of the 'other'. Most do challenge the gender positions developed by Nietzsche but claim that many of his 'philosophical' insights either mitigate or override such sexism, see the review by Claire Colebrook, 1994.

authoritative series, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*.⁵⁷⁴ I will now discuss each of these in turn.

The picture of Nietzsche's political ideas which emerges from Tracy B Strong's analysis, some what ironically given Strong's own stated aim to take Nietzsche's politics more seriously, begins to look a little like the proto-facist model that Kaufmann attempted to repudiate much earlier. Strong's analysis turns upon Nietzsche's concern with culture and his love of the classical world. Particularly important in Strong's account is Nietzsche's writing on the theme of the Greek *agon* or "contest", which played an important part in his historical analysis of early state typologies. Strong argues that Nietzsche's primary concern is to ensure the succession of cultural greatness. "Culture" has two meanings for Nietzsche, according to Strong; the first is a form of "psychological health"⁵⁷⁵ and the other is "conscious experimentation".⁵⁷⁶ Great creative cultures, and note here that 'great' appears to denote *innovative* culture in Strong's account, were the most important product of the pre-Socratic competitive state in which no single individual ever got the upper hand. Thus in this ancient typology, ... "inside the political space of the state, politics *happen*, they are not *used*", says Strong.⁵⁷⁷

Strong further argues that Nietzsche's analysis of nihilism suggested to him that as the *agon* was gradually replaced by the political state, i.e. a condition in which "The citizen existed *in* the city-state, but not *for it*,..."⁵⁷⁸ then the gradual domination of the state by one leader, council and/or world-view became dominant. This alleged decline in ancient pluralism led, in turn, to a gradual genealogical masking, characterised by the now hidden, now apparent development of the struggle between master morality and slave morality. In other words, it began the period in which *ressentiment* would eventually gain the upper hand. Thus, according to Strong's reading of Nietzsche, modern, post-Socratic politics, were simply a form of petty politics, that is, politics that were used as an end in itself or to defend some ideological position such as nationalism or socialism, an epiphenomenon of the Christian world view.

⁵⁷⁴ In what follows I take Ansell-Pearson's introduction to this authoritative edition to be a distilled and compressed version of his other writings on Nietzsche.

⁵⁷⁵ Strong, 1988, p194, interestingly, although Strong clearly has some notion of "libidinal economics" in mind when it comes to Nietzsche's view of cultural value, it never occurs to him to re-examine Nietzsche's politics in this light. Rather, Nietzsche's political views are historized rather than viewed within Nietzsche's psycho-sexual standard. In other words, Nietzsche's political claims are not evaluated in their own terms.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid, 1988, p215.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid, 1988, p196.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid, 1988, p193.

However, because Strong suggests that for Nietzsche, the *agon* was the “public” sense of a strong political culture, the drive towards democratisation and individuation which is represented in post-Socratic politics, only served to erode this same “public” sense, in other words, it sowed the seeds of its own destruction. Thus for Nietzsche, modern politics, where an ...“active governing principle of philosophical authority...” is absent, is in itself, a definitive expression of nihilism, meaning therefore, that ...“present-day political *happenings* are at most unimportant”, for Nietzsche claims Strong.⁵⁷⁹ Thus Strong appears to be following Kaufmann in his designation of Nietzsche as an *anti-political* philosopher.

Leaving aside the question-mark as to Nietzsche’s conception of the *agon*, Strong, unable to delay the inevitable for long, eventually turns to Nietzsche’s notion of the kind of “great politics” which he espoused against these same petty politics. With this same description of nihilism framing the backdrop of the drama being played out, he claims, “*The role of strong politics for Nietzsche is to hide from consciousness the genealogical foundations of the state*” [Strong’s emphasis].⁵⁸⁰ Thus what is required are the kind of “new artist-philosophers” who can deliver a new set of concealment’s or mythologies on a “social level”.⁵⁸¹

This appears to be almost the complete reversal of what Nietzsche actually does in his *Genealogy* where Nietzsche consistently follows through on his own unmasking to the point of self-parody, he is reluctant to replace what remains beyond the most impressionistic and sketchy of outlines.⁵⁸² More seriously, Strong does not seem to take into his own account the mimetic realities of the event of the text itself. Something that Nietzsche would have been very aware of, in other words, the unmasking of slave morality, once achieved can never be forgotten. So the notion that Nietzsche had so much of his own historiography invested in such a notion of philosophical re-masking seems a little implausible. Finally, and here we return to the notion of the *agon* as some kind of proto-modern and democratic public forum, Nietzsche’s historical hero’s were strong, devious and powerful men, men with an abundance of aggressive instincts and sexual energy who ruthlessly brushed aside the political institutions of their own day. Such men hardly fit within

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid, 1988, p189.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid, 1988, p195.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid, 1988, p213.

⁵⁸² Nietzsche, 1995, p127, Nietzsche, as in the later *Ecce Homo*, has little to say regarding the precise nature of political life except that, Christianity’s will to truth would continue to undermine itself, as would all higher values, thus he says this will be played out in Europe, in a “great drama of a hundred acts,” over the “next two centuries, the most terrible, most dubious but perhaps also the one rich in hope”.

Strong's conception of the "artist-philosopher" characteristic of the period of the *agon*.

Ultimately, Strong's account would appear to do either one of two things for Nietzsche's politics. His analysis would appear to excuse Nietzsche's politics on account of their weak, playful and inconsistent nature. Nietzsche's politics then become a kind of aesthetized political skulduggery, perhaps more remanient of the ancient *trivial* arts such as those of the rhetorician, the logician and the grammarian, arts which are primarily designed to fool and trick. Or if we are to take Nietzsche's positions seriously as some kind of Machivellian art of state-craft type of approach, then as Benjamin and Habermas have noted more generally concerning aesthetized politics, this understanding sails uncomfortably close to the winds of what Fascism actually became.⁵⁸³ What else would a new philosophy of concealment (as opposed to the old forms), propagated by a new kind of artist who would, in turn, re-legitimate the kind of strong "public" state through which is capable of defeating nihilism look like, if not like the stage-management associated with Fascism.

Furthermore, Strong also holds with regard to Nietzsche's well known distaste for the nation state, that it also follows, therefore, that since one of the most dangerous petty productions of nihilism was nationalism, the struggle against nationalism had to transcend the particular ideological interest, in short, *meaning* must be global and comprehensive if it is to be successful according to this account. Thus says Strong, according to Nietzsche, ... "great politics means international politics".⁵⁸⁴ Again, according to this view of Nietzsche, says Strong, he wanted nothing less than a European "domination of the earth"⁵⁸⁵ and the re-establishment of the kind of "order of rank" which in turn could produce a) strong individuals (culturally understood) and b) stability and continuity which were the basis for "psychological health" and innovation.

While Strong at least correctly identifies a psycho-sexual model of sorts in the process of genealogical unmasking, in so far as he recognises that Nietzsche is developing a critique based upon the unconscious drives and impulses which might, in turn, underpin Nietzsche's political ideas. It also appears that the 'philosophical' Nietzsche is the first casualty of his reading, for it has become a denuded shadow of philosophy in the Western tradition, almost the polar opposite

⁵⁸³ Benjamin, 1968, 242, and Habermas, 1990, p99.

⁵⁸⁴ Strong, 1988, p210.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid, 1988, p214.

of Kufmann's "rationalist" reading. That is, there seems to be nothing left for the philosopher to do in the future but to engage in myth creation and genealogical 'research' of some kind. Secondly, the politics themselves are now reloaded with the usual number of proto-Fascist overtones and themes such as great leaders who build Euro-centric world "domination" through a stronger and unified Europe, a Europe which would be run along some kind of hierarchical caste lines, and where great cultural struggles would go on within a reinvigorated super-state system, a system in which more profound cultural battles would be waged over the heart and soul of meaning itself. This arrangement would, in turn, produce a limitless future of European, if not global, stability and continuity. If *this* is how we are to understand Nietzsche's politics then these ideas would appear to dovetail with an important historical moment in twentieth century history, to be sure, but at the expense of the historical specificity of Nietzsche's actual project.⁵⁸⁶ The "Führer Prinzip" amounts to another eschatological project but the historical lineage between the Nazi's conceptions and the eschatological projects of the nineteenth century are too complicated to be discussed in full here and must be left for another place.

While there is no doubt that Strong does reconstruct some important elements that are present in Nietzsche's thought, for example, there is certainly something to be learned from his analysis of Nietzsche's interest in the *agon*, there is an open question regarding the comprehensiveness of his view of Nietzsche in more general terms, largely because the *agon* only ever makes an appearance in Nietzsche's youthful writings and never in the published writings.

The popular theme of creative stagnation which is ascribed to Nietzsche by Strong is also puzzling. The fear of the stagnation of creative impulses in industrialising societies was by no means limited to would-be 'political crackpots' like Nietzsche, such themes dominated the thought of many divergent thinkers of the nineteenth century, from thinkers of the periphery such as Carlyle, to mainstream thinkers and essayists such as John Stuart Mill. For example, after

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid, 1988, p310, Strong describes his own reading of Nietzsche as that of a left/splitter/therapeutic/vitalist, whatever that may mean. A footnote reference which indicates that he draws on the work of MacIntyre, Magnus, Yovel and Vattimo does not help much, p364, but the relationship between his approach and his findings is puzzling. Clearly Strong's reading of Nietzsche's politics, while much more sophisticated than the Nazi rendition, there does still appear to be a family resemblance. Thus I suppose he means that his critique of Nietzsche is from a broadly leftist and hermeneutic tradition? As opposed to the notion that his Nietzsche is a left/splitter/therapeutic/vitalist which I do not take him to be saying. Although it is still quite possible that this is indeed what he is suggesting.

some laudatory statements concerning Wilhelm Von Humbolt's *The Sphere and Duties of Government*, for example, Mill said in *On Liberty*,

In this age, the mere example of nonconformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service. Precisely because the tyranny of opinion is such as to make eccentricity a reproach, it is desirable, in order to break through that tyranny, that people should be eccentric. Eccentricity has always abounded; and the amount of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigour, and moral courage, which it contained.⁵⁸⁷

The point is that the "age" to which Mill refers cannot be taken as uniformly understood, even if many of the normative panaceas were superficially similar. To reduce Nietzsche to yet another nineteenth century thinker in the Victorian mold, is to wrongly lump him in with the liberal tradition which he explicitly rejected and railed against as being a part of the problem.

This same criticism could also be levelled at the so-called 'post-modern' readings of Nietzsche, such as those of Mark Warren, who simply dislodges Nietzsche's thought from the all important historical context of German idealism. The motivation behind Mark Warren's *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, is to separate Nietzsche's "reasonable analysis of nihilism" and his "interesting theory of post-modern power", from his aberrant political opinions. In other words, Warren would also like to recover a kind of liberal Nietzsche, one who is concerned, like Mill, with preserving and encouraging non-conformity. Warren wants to "supplement", in his "reconstruction", what Nietzsche would have said had he understood himself. Thus Nietzsche's insights into the nature of the "post-modern philosophy of power", best supports value positions such as those of "individuation, command intersubjectivity, egalitarianism and pluralism".⁵⁸⁸ Warren concedes that these are not the values that Nietzsche affirmed but he asserts that they would "represent a consistent extension of his philosophy".

To be fair of course, Warren does not set out to give an 'authentic' account of Nietzsche's political views but merely alert us to the paradoxical nature of these same views and their inadequacy *vis-à-vis* the more reasonable standard of modern

⁵⁸⁷ Mill, 1994, p67.

⁵⁸⁸ Warren, 1988, p247.

liberal democracies, which of course, already comfortably places Warren inside Nietzsche's own terms of reference as a *decadent*. More seriously however, this also immediately places Warren in the category of those who believe that Nietzsche's political opinions were simply incorrect and rather embarrassing, a view shared by other 'post-modern' scholars such as Richard Rorty. Rorty, for example, considers Nietzsche's political views untenable but seeks to retain his enduring philosophical insights to create a "postmodernist bourgeois liberalism" or "liberal ironism".⁵⁸⁹ While Warren acknowledges a level of scholarly consensus regarding Nietzsche's overt political opinions, such as his hatred of the modern nation state, that he was anti-Reich and that he was disgusted with anti-Semitism, never-the-less, he is in agreement with both the French Nietzsche scholar, Marc Sautet and George Lukács,⁵⁹⁰ that Nietzsche sought to defend the interests of ... "an increasingly marginalized landed aristocracy", the social base of a "romantic anti-capitalism".

Warren contends that Nietzsche's political philosophy is to be found in his philosophy of power not in his overt political opinions. Warren argues, therefore, that Nietzsche did not really understand the implications of this philosophy of power, and this in turn because he held to a number of uncritical assumptions about politics in modern societies. Warren suggests that these assumptions were a) that human nature included a will to *political* domination and b) that no standard exists for the Judgement of political action and finally c) such Judgement that might exist stems from the will to dominate.

Warren is quick to acknowledge one of the main lines of contemporary understanding of Nietzsche's view of political philosophy, that is, that he injected a political content into his "will to power" which was "fundamentally at odds" with his intrinsic political values (i.e. his alleged philosophy of liberal values). In other words, Nietzsche's elaboration of the "will to power" becomes an ontological category as political domination, which could only be rooted out at the expense of life as such. Warren claims, however, that this reading does not sit well with the "will to power" once this is understood as a "self-reflective telos", the "self-reflective telos" which emerges from Warren's own reading.

According to Warren then, Nietzsche is a kind of phenomenologist who ultimately privileges critical and reflexive thinking *per se*, thus some values such as "positive freedom, autonomy, individuality and plurality" do not square with

⁵⁸⁹Conway, 1997, p157.

⁵⁹⁰Lukács's, 1980, p341, meaning that the "struggle against the capitalist division of labour" was ultimately nostalgic.

notions of political domination. Warren puts down the "bloody aspects" of Nietzsche's politics to Nietzsche's poor knowledge of modern politics. According to Warren, Nietzsche a) wrongly assumed that cultures of sufficient quality to individuate power require an institutionalised division of cultural and economic labour in society, b) he wrongly estimated the effects of nihilism as the fact that the vast majority in Western cultures were incapable of grasping the opportunities for individuated power presented, in turn, by the dissolution of the Christian era, i.e. the herd problem. Thus he claimed that all mass institutions such as modern democracies and parliamentary processes were engaged in a levelling down operation, and finally c) that all of the above are rooted, in turn, on a number of mis-placed biological assumptions. This last assumption is particularly important, Warren argues that all of this occurs because Nietzsche held to the Lamarckian idea that generational traits and environmental responses become physiologically inherited. The point here is that Nietzsche's characterisation of nihilism, in this account, understood as 1) a loss of conceptual orientation 2) a loss of self-hood and meaning and finally 3) experiences of powerlessness and historically evolving cultural structures which provide displaced and vicarious self-identities, were all accumulatively compounded under the biological rubric of 'will to domination'.

There are many problems with this account of Nietzsche's political philosophy. In the first instance, the notion that Nietzsche held to any kind of liberalism is particularly hard to sustain, again, given his trenchant opposition to the all of the actual political institutions and dominant ideologies of his own day, including that of liberalism. Then there is the question of Warren's method, as one commentator has recently remarked, Warren's analytic reading of Nietzsche amounts to a "smorgasboard" approach.⁹⁹¹ Clearly, one could object to the way that Warren splits up Nietzsche's thought in such a relatively arbitrary fashion and as we shall see with regard to the notion of "general economics", it is perfectly feasible that one could accept each component of Nietzsche's thought, his philosophy and politics for example, without apology, and still make sense of it in terms which do not sacrifice textual fidelity and more importantly, which does not lead one to conclude that Nietzsche's political thought 'anticipated' some brand or other of a generalised concept of Fascism, or that his overt political thought was simply ill-informed.

In any case, in Warren's view, Nietzsche becomes a philosopher of post-modern politics, suggesting that he addressed the causes of the de-centred subject,

⁹⁹¹ Woolfolk, *Political Theory*, Vol 14, No 1.

such as the self-dissolution of the historical subjects of the Enlightenment; principally those of reason, progress and freedom, and provided new understandings more appropriate for the present period of mental and temporal dislocation. Nietzsche then, according to Warren, provides solutions nowhere stated and attends to problems he could not have known. There is surely something fundamentally wrong when a philosopher's stated project is either ignored or reversed, as it is in the case of the liberal Nietzsche, or expanded upon, as in the case of the post-modern Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's analysis does, however, amount to a critique of his own understanding of modernity, including its dominant ideologies, and presents a highly specific historical and political escape route from this same modernity but as we shall see, this escape has little in common with so-called 'post-modern' politics. Thus Nietzsche tells us in his final testament, *Ecce Homo*, of his ultimate ambition in *Beyond Good and Evil*, one of his most important published works that,

This book is in all essentials a *critique of modernity*, the modern sciences, the modern arts, not even excluding modern politics, together with signposts to an antithetical type who is as little modern as possible, a noble, an affirmative type.⁵⁹²

In other words, Nietzsche could hardly have anticipated, and is not concerned with so-called postmodernity, with issues of consumption, space-time dislocation and the de-centred subject but with a number of classical modern issues such as the emerging evolutionary materialism of his own day, (which he associated with Darwin), with Enlightenment utilitarianism, instrumental reason and the inflated optimism of the physical sciences, with the egalitarian and bureaucratic nature of the emerging mass democratic state and with Wagnerean aesthetics, which he felt induced 'romantic' intoxication or what we might call 'escapism' today. According to Nietzsche each of these specific modern phenomena are moments of the *decadent*, thus it is not that these are products of nihilism, rather these are constitutive of nihilism in the modern period.

The nihilism of modernity, as we have already seen with regard to Stirner and Marx, is rather, when epistemological conventions and cultural conventions break down, and when moral norms and once solid ethical values break away from their traditional religious sources. It is the product of so-called centred subjects,

⁵⁹²Nietzsche, 1992, p82.

satisfied in their self-evident moral autonomy and 'enjoying' the period of mass bureaucratic societies as these move towards national growth and division. If postmodernism looks like this in some way, which I do not believe it does, then this is simply grist to the mill of those who have always thought the post-modern just a contiguous extension of the modern.

Returning to Warren's account then, it is also worth noting that Warren takes the view that Nietzsche's "will to power" is largely a kind of naked self-assertion, a form of existentialism, and that this also remains problematic. Maudmarie Clark's recent influential study, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, suggests rather, that Nietzsche really viewed the "will to power" as a complex of second-order psychological drives, as such, one could expect such drives to produce much more than simple self-assertion, indeed such a complex psychological account might well provide very different explanations of effects. In other words, a 'Freudian' reading could explain self-assertions own negation, as Freud himself was to demonstrate with notions such "passive aggressive". It might well be argued, as Staten does, that like Schopenhauer before him, Nietzsche always held to a conception of human nature that was composed of a bundle of drives which were as often as not concealed from daylight. In *Daybreak* Nietzsche certainly appears to take this view when he says,

However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of drives which constitute his being.⁹⁹³

Thus Warren mis-identifies Nietzsche's conception of such drives as exclusively Lamarkian and evolving whereas Nietzsche appears to take the view that one's drives are more often than not likely to be hidden from one, the total economy of the drives may well change but the now partial, now complete, obfuscation of such drives remains a permanent element of the human possibility. Of course, Nietzsche was a little more optimistic than Schopenhauer concerning the possibilities that might exist for unmasking drives and motivations, and this might well make life a little more tolerable from time to time, never-the-less, the "will to power" is very differently conceived when viewed through the lens of sexual and other drives than when, as in the case of Warren, it is simply seen as an unchanging power and will to domination *per se*.

⁹⁹³ Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 1989, p74.

Alan Woolfolk, has also pointed out that any understanding of Nietzsche's account of nihilism must consider his doctrine of "honesty" [Realichkeit], something which Nietzsche held grew out of Christian moral culture itself and which perishes with Christianity's demise. Such a view relocates Nietzsche firmly with the Young Hegelian milieu, which is more readily supported by the consistent themes of his texts, the precariousness of the great historical subjects such as rationality, morality and freedom upon which so many readings of Nietzsche are based, emerged from a Hegelianism which represented the highest eschatological form in Nietzsche's view. As Nietzsche repeatedly said, nihilism was when the highest values devalued themselves.

The total effect of all this is that in Warren's account he simply ignores Nietzsche's eschatology. Of course the question of Nietzsche's playful use of different styles is too large a topic to be covered in depth here, however, two elements seem incontrovertible; the first being his philological use of metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche,⁵⁹⁴ the second being the shrill and apocalyptic tone of his entire *oeuvre*, from his early career choice as an "untimely" man, through his period of prophetic exuberance in *Zarathustra* and finally, to his self-induced pathos in *Ecce Homo* and his Wagner writings, his feelings of being either mis-understood or ignored in his own time are fundamental to his entire project.

There is a natural tension in Nietzsche's thought which is expressed in these two dominant modes of writing, the eschatological and the philological. On the one hand the apocalyptic tone suggests a desperate sense of urgency, a time of crisis, a need to be taken seriously and a concern with self-legitimation, however, on the other hand, one must be aware that one must not take everything Nietzsche wrote literally since Nietzsche sought to highlight the essential uncertainty and openness of epistemological claims *vis a vis* nihilism. The problem of interpretation, therefore, is what statements one should regard as typical of the first type and which the second. Although there is no simple solution to this problem it is not intractable. Throughout I shall take as my guide, the style in which Nietzsche's politics are delivered. Thus Nietzsche's political positions, few though they are, when discussed openly, should be understood from within the system of meanings provided by the eschatological style of delivery and with the reconstruction of the affirmative values. His metaphorical statements regarding politics, on the other

⁵⁹⁴ The first of these is a device whereby words can take on new meanings by being applied in different ways, it suggests an infinite transferability of words. The second suggests the endless redrawing entailment relations within language, such as between cause and effect, or substance and attribute or between subject and predicate. Finally synecdoche refers to the inherent partiality of all linguistic description, see Axiotis, 1991.

hand, and his use of analogy, are the work of Nietzsche the philologist and his concern more often than not is principally critique *per se* and so I will place these on one side.

Danial Conway, drawing on the philological Nietzsche, has noted, much like Micheal Tanner, that Nietzsche was a man for all seasons. In other words, that all of the traditions which have lain some claim to being Nietzsche's true heirs, can look to some text or Nietzschean 'sound bite' for support, notes Conway. Although Conway accepts that Nietzsche specifically repudiated many of these interpretations Nietzsche's rhetorical style was always going to be open to abuse, thus says Conway, ..."nothing he [Nietzsche] says rules out definitively the Nazi interpretation of his writings".⁵⁹⁵ Conway suggests, for example, that almost every major interpretation, including that of Arendt, Kaufmann, Schutte, Habermas, Warren, Detwiler and Ansell-Pearson subscribes to some version of Nietzsche as a "failed radical voluntarist", an idea which he locates in Heidegger's reading. In other words, such scholars have long maintained, although to differing degrees of course, that while Nietzsche may have been an acute critic of political modernity, ultimately his own politics were a kind of "naive voluntarism", in that he believed that a 'powerful' individual, full to overflowing with energy, invention and vitality could live a life above the herd.⁵⁹⁶

The problem here, and this is something that I have already alluded to with regard to Warren's reading of Nietzsche, is that Nietzsche's rhetorical style, if not ignored, is often used to justify an "aesthetized politics" kind of reading, "aesthetized politics" being synonymous with Fascism in such accounts. However, the eschatological milieu in which Nietzsche believed he had found himself did not lead in any necessary sense towards an anaesthetisation of politics. All that is required is that the bearer of eschatological hopes is able to self-justify that which he/she or it, bares with reference to an coherent, if not always compelling, epochal conception of an "end-time".

To be sure, Nietzsche did, from time to time, suggest that living one's life should be done artistically (or philologically) but this is a very different idea than the notion of the complete subsumption of political life to aesthetic considerations that Fascism [and Futurism] implies.⁵⁹⁷ Rather, Nietzsche's rhetorical style, was a

⁵⁹⁵ Conway, 1997, p120.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid, 1997, p122.

⁵⁹⁷ Nietzsche, aphorism 290, "One thing is needful.- To "give style" to one's character- a great and rare art!".

deliberate device which was chosen because it might have been the most effective mode of critique. Although Nietzsche often heaped scorn and derision upon social and cultural instrumentality,⁵⁹⁸ this was always within the context of the dominant decadent values, nowhere is there the outright rejection of instrumentality as such, or to an instrumental means to affirmative values in their own right.⁵⁹⁹ Thus rather than “failed naive voluntarist”, Nietzsche’s politics, like those of Stirner and Marx, should be characterised as those of a ‘post-Hegelian eschatological revolutionist’.

Another series of attempts to make sense of Nietzsche’s allegedly embarrassing political legacy, if not to apologise for them, are those of Bruce Detwiler⁶⁰⁰ and Keith Ansell-Pearson [also considered by Conway, see above]. Detwiler and Pearson’s views are very close so in what follows I will discuss Pearson’s account since it is the most recent of the two. Ansell-Pearson has pointed out, in the tradition of Lukacs and others, that Nietzsche did, ...“not regard the human person as inviolable and human life as sacrosanct; neither does he believe that all persons should be treated with equal respect as moral beings”.⁶⁰¹ Furthermore, Ansell-Pearson suggests that “order of rank” was the “central political concept” which was used by Nietzsche to try and organise his cultural imperatives and the supporting economic arrangements thereof. In general terms this focus on Nietzsche’s notion of the “order of rank” has suggested either some form of “Heroic individualism” or “Aristocratic Radicalism”.⁶⁰²

However, while there can be no denying Nietzsche’s frequent use of either the notion of “order of rank” or of the “aristocratic spirit” throughout his writings, neither phrase is used consistently in the sense suggested by Ansell-Pearson. Rather, and this was first noted by turn-of-the-century anarchists such as Emma Goldman, when Nietzsche spoke of “order of rank” it was quite often used in the sense of a designation of “rank-ordering” and the “rank-defining of value judgements”⁶⁰³ and in the case of the aristocratic spirit, he was referring to the

⁵⁹⁸ Nietzsche, 1990, p106, Nietzsche said, “You utilitarian, you too love everything *useful* only as a *vehicle* of your inclinations- you too really find the noise of the wheels intolerable?”

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid, 1990, p86, for example where Nietzsche talks of using religion for Machiavellian purpose, in this case for mobilising the consent of the governed by the governors.

⁶⁰⁰ Detwiler, 1990.

⁶⁰¹ Pearson, 1995, px.

⁶⁰² See Thiele, 1990, where he uses the term “Heroic individualism” to denote Nietzsche’s theoretical struggle to establish “individuation”, although he is also aware that Nietzsche never uses the term “Heroic individualism”, p3.

⁶⁰³ Nietzsche, 1995, p13.

aristocratic sensibility, the “spiritual *noblesse*”, a “typical character traits” he said in *On the Genealogy of Morality*.⁶⁰⁴

It is also worth noting that none of Nietzsche's historical heroes were aristocratic in any traditional sense, both Cesare Borgia and Napoleon Bonaparte, for example, were common born soldiers.⁶⁰⁵ Indeed, Nietzsche said in *Ecce Homo* that he ...“wouldn't award to the young German Kaiser the honour of being my coachman”.⁶⁰⁶ Ansell-Pearson is well aware of this spiritual/actual distinction but ultimately adheres to Strauss' notion that Nietzsche himself extrapolated, through the device of “order of rank”, from aristocratic spirit to aristocratic politics, in so far as this denotes those who choose to *rule* through a self-conception which is primarily founded upon hierarchies and upon a “consciousness of difference”.⁶⁰⁷

Ansell-Pearson sums up the Nietzschean aristocratic spirit in the following terms (and here I am paraphrasing); it is the self-knowledge of one who knows that he only has duties to his peers, and that one should have the freedom to do as one pleases towards those who do not share this peer position and finally, such values suggested a Nietzschean indulgence in a rather “sophisticated concept of friendship”,⁶⁰⁸ idea's which are summarised in the following manner by Ansell-Pearson,

For Nietzsche it is only by placing themselves in the service of unconscious purposes and higher goals, such as the production of genius, that individuals are able to give meaning and purpose to their groundless existence.⁶⁰⁹

Furthermore, Ansell-Pearson appears to automatically assume that this “challenging” and “disturbing” vision of political, social and cultural life is not our own, thus the ultimate value in Nietzsche's thought must be his ability to ‘provoke’ we intellectually moribund moderns. While there is no doubt that this

⁶⁰⁴ Nietzsche, 1995, p15, also in Nietzsche, 1995, he says that the “aristocratic value equation” is as follows, good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = blessed, p19, also see p15.

⁶⁰⁵ Nietzsche, 1995, pps. 25-6, Cesare Borgia's father was, of course, Pope Alexander III, but although he was from a warrior and Papal clan who had connections with the Spanish House of Aragon, they were not ‘blue blooded’ in the conventional sense. In fact Cesare was the second bastard son of Alexander III. It is also worth noting that when Nietzsche refers to the noble “blond beast” this is a historical reference to the ancient Germanic celtic tribes, for as he says, ...“between the old Germanic peoples and us Germans there is scarcely an idea in common, let alone a blood relationship”.

⁶⁰⁶ Nietzsche, 1992, p12.

⁶⁰⁷ Ansell-Pearson, 1995, pxiv.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid, 1995, pxv.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid, 1995, pxxi.

can be the spirit of a certain reading of Nietzsche, it should also be noted that, as in the case of Strong's Nietzsche, these are the themes which are developed by the young twenty-four or five year old Nietzsche who wrote the unpublished fragment, *The Greek State*. A more complete understanding of Nietzsche's mature thought must acknowledge the full complexity of his theory of human drives, their sublimation and their suppression. In short, any reading should take into account his notion of the "will to power" and what Ansell-Pearson calls, following Staten, the "total economy of the whole".

Leaving aside the question of the ultimate value of Nietzsche's thought, which is certainly something which cannot be settled within this chapter taken alone, Ansell-Pearson aligns himself with a kind of general conclusion to Nietzsche's political philosophy that we have seen else where, i.e. that Nietzsche was concerned with the need to produce "genius" and eccentricity and furthermore, he sought to give meaning to an otherwise groundless existence, and finally, in his role as the grand inquisitor of our values, change should be pressed home with violence if necessary, Nietzsche the philosopher once politically emasculated, still takes pride of place in the legitimate Western cannon of 'thought provoking' thinkers.

On the other hand, this conventional reading tells us little about the paradox of Nietzsche's "bloody politics", as Warren has referred to them. For example, we can see that even on first glance, according to Nietzsche, the powerful are the beautiful and to be beautiful one must be happy and free from *ressentiment*, [this latter term is another phrase that he was addicted to, like "decadence"]⁶¹⁰. Clearly, in Nietzsche's view, his notion of "beautiful" was not even a physical characteristic at all but a spiritual one, and the same is true of his general conception of power. Although, to be sure, it is also the case that Nietzsche took the view that power was ultimately determined by a physiological origin, this was not held to be a 'physical' phenomena in the sense of a strictly naked self-assertion i.e. specifically political power *per se*.

Thus, put most simply, Nietzsche's "grand politics" are those which are carried out by individuals or cultures which act, not coercively from crabbed and inferior feelings, but by providing spiritual leadership from principles which are produced by an overabundance and excess of feeling, sometimes such action will be

⁶¹⁰Nietzsche, 1995, p21, where he says, "The beginning of the slave's revolt in morality occurs when resentment itself turns creative and gives birth to values:",... Denied recourse to action, Nietzsche calls this birth of values "imaginary revenge".

violent and sometimes not.⁶¹¹ For Nietzsche, political violence did exist in the world and such violence might even have been inevitable, a part of the total economy of life, but this does not necessarily suggest that he thought that spiritual and moral leadership always required violence nor that it was always beneficial to civilisation.

Again it is worth repeating that two of his most important historical heroes, Borgia and Napoleon, tried to provide a new basis for 'national' and then continental, stability, the first did much to unite some of the fractious city states of Northern Italy and the latter mainland Europe. In both cases Nietzsche held these projects to be beneficial because they were products of the greatest effort of the will and encouraged "racial mixing", one of the prerequisites of great strength in his view.⁶¹² In any case, the more important point is that it is clear that such cultural and anthropological politics have little to do with modern liberalism and its concern with the collective re-production of inspiration, "genius" and eccentricity.

In a sense there is nothing wrong with Ansell-Pearson's characterisation of Nietzsche's *philosophy* as a kind of "aristocratic radicalism", the problems begin, rather, when this concept is extended into his *political* account of Nietzsche's thought. The fact is that Nietzsche's historical compass was much larger than the comparatively recent liberal concern with the untoward effects of modern industrialisation than the politics of liberalism might suggest. Nietzsche's crisis of nihilism had roots which extended back to the beginnings of the slave revolt in man, which for Nietzsche, meant going back to the early Jews.⁶¹³ Here Nietzsche is an audacious prophet, some might even say a delusional, who stands not, as the 'untimely man' of Germany in the nineteenth century, but of several millennia of Western history, "truth steps into battle with the lie of millennia" he says of his life's work in *Ecce Homo*.⁶¹⁴ "Grand politics" are not simply the politics of the anti-Reich but of a whole new value-form of civilisation, in Nietzsche's account.

Finally, in one of Nietzsche's most important aphorisms on "grand politics" we see that he flatly contradicts Ansell-Person's reading of these as a kind of aristocratic politics. This passage is worth quoting at length;

⁶¹¹ Nietzsche, 1992, p97, where the theme of freedom from resentment is viewed as a pre-requisite for "grand politics".

⁶¹² Nietzsche, 1990, aphorisms 242 and 251, where the unification and mixing of Europeans becomes a "great physiological process" in which an "essentially supra-national and nomadic type of man" gains a world-historical foothold, dispossessed of climatic and class determinates such a man is able to become a "tyrant- in every sense of the word, including the most spiritual."

⁶¹³ Nietzsche, 1990, aphorism, 195.

⁶¹⁴ Nietzsche, 1992, p97.

On grand politics.- However much utility and vanity, those of individuals as of peoples, may play a part in grand politics: the strongest tide that carries them forward is the *need for the feeling of power*, which from time to time streams up out of inexhaustible wells not only in the souls of princes and the powerful but not least in the lower orders of the people. There comes again and again the hour when the masses are *ready* to stake their life, their goods, their conscience, their virtue so as to acquire that higher enjoyment and as a victorious, capriciously victorious nation to rule over other nations (or to think it rules).

Nietzsche goes on to point out, in a theme more highly developed in the later *On the Genealogy of Morality*, that it is precisely when princes and leaders are able to harness such energy from the masses that they are most likely to spout moral platitudes of justification for their rule, and it is, similarly, when such energy is catharthetically “discharged” that the designation of “evil” to describe such behaviour emerges from the vanquished.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹⁵ Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, apothems, 189.

Our most sacred convictions, the unchanging elements in our
supreme values, are judgements of our muscles.

Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*⁶¹⁶

Schopenhauer's question immediately comes to us in the most
terrifying way: Has existence any meaning at all?

Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*⁶¹⁷

The Birth of Tragedy....it smells offensively Hegelian...

Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*⁶¹⁸

II

The general economics of 'sickness and health'⁶¹⁹

I began the introduction to this chapter by pointing out that Nietzsche's writings are full of references, comments and observations concerning sexuality and its role in the formation of culture and civilisation. From the *Birth of Tragedy*,⁶²⁰ through mature works such as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, to *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Ecce Homo* the role of sexuality is never far from Nietzsche's thoughts. In Nietzsche's psycho-sexual philosophy, 'civilisation', can be read as a sexual text through the ever present hieroglyphs of cultural and social mores. Thus, according to Nietzsche, the health of a civilisation, as of individual people, is determined by their ability to freely "discharge" their sexual energy.⁶²¹ Whole societies can become bearers of a

⁶¹⁶ Nietzsche, 1968, p173.

⁶¹⁷ Nietzsche, 1974, p308.

⁶¹⁸ Nietzsche, 1992, p48.

⁶¹⁹ The term "general economics" is taken from Habermas, 1990, p211, to refer to Bataille's re-reading of Freud. Habermas said of this project, "Bataille seeks an economics of the total social ecology of drives; this theory is supposed to explain why modernity continues its life-endangering exclusions without alternatives, and why hope in a dialectic of enlightenment, which has accompanied the modern project right down to Western Marxism, is in vain:...", 1990, p217.

⁶²⁰ Nietzsche, 1993, p7, where he says for example, "Is madness not necessarily, perhaps, the symptom of degeneracy, decline, of the final stage of a culture? Is there perhaps such a thing- a questions for psychiatrists- as neuroses of *health*?" Also, he begins his study of aesthetics in the following manner, "...Just as the reproduction of the species depends on the duality of the sexes," so to the duality of Apolline and Dionysiac, p14. The Dionysiac, according to Nietzsche, is the sexual seething of "primal oneness", p29.

⁶²¹ Particularly important here is aphorism 119 in *Daybreak* which has been more fully discussed by Henry Staten, the first few lines read, "*Experience and invention*.- However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of drives which constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counter-play among one another, and above all the laws of their nutriment remain wholly unknown to him. This nutriment is therefore a work of chance: our daily experiences throw some prey in the way of now this, now that drive, and the drive sizes it eagerly; but the coming and going of these events as a whole stands in no rational relationship to the nutritional requirements of the totality of the drives: so that the outcome will always be twofold- the starvation of someone the overfeeding of others". Nietzsche talked of a "large scale accounting" and of the "amazing economy of

particular bundle of sexual and social mores through the rules, regulations and commitments of particular religious or cultural formations, whether these are of the Pagan, Jewish, Catholic, humanist, or Protestant variety, according to Nietzsche. Thus to dam up the sexual drive or to obscure the purpose and function of such drives through a cloak of moral humbug is to invite disaster.

Indeed, not only did Nietzsche follow Schopenhauer's psychological insights concerning the unconscious drives and motivations of persons, but he also developed a relatively sophisticated theory of sublimation's and eventually, he was to prioritise the sexual drive among these. For example, in *Daybreak* he said, "I find no more than six essentially different methods of combating the vehemence of a drive".⁶²² Nietzsche then goes on to characterise these as 1) self-denial or placing one's self outside of temptation 2) what he called "strict-regularity" or what we might call 'rationing' 3) then comes "unrestrained gratification" 4) then there is the device of "mental association", such as the association of the "devil and sexual enjoyment", suggests Nietzsche 5) then comes "strenuous labour" or re-direction, such as a heavy self-inflicted work-load and finally says Nietzsche 6) he points to asceticism and physiological weakening. Nietzsche's conclusion to this particular passage then amounts to nothing less than an early version of the "will to power", he said,

While 'we' believe we are complaining about the vehemence of a drive, at bottom it is one drive which is complaining about another; for us to become aware that we are suffering from the vehemence of a drive presupposes the existence of another equally vehement or even more vehement drive, and that a struggle is in prospect in which our intellect is going to have to take sides.⁶²³

Furthermore, in this sexual economics there is obviously no place for social meaning of the kind which might go beyond such instincts, ["There are no moral phenomena at all, only a moral interpretation of phenomena....",⁶²⁴ he said in *Beyond Good and Evil*], to try to give such instincts a deeper or more significant meaning is ultimately a sign of decadence or a further manifestation of nihilism in his view. 'Sick' civilisations are those which sublimate in ways, such as in the famous case of

the preservation of the species", GS aphorism 1. According to Nietzsche, the suppression of female eroticism among the polite classes, and the bourgeois marriage which he associates with this process, he regards as the monstrous "psychic knot", GS ap71. And of the .."economy of my soul", GS ap338.

⁶²² Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 1989, p64.

⁶²³ Ibid, 1989, p64. Compare this with Nietzsche, 1990, aphorism 36, p66, for example.

⁶²⁴ Nietzsche, 1990, aphorism 109, p96.

Christian pity, which threaten to do so at the expense of life as such, again what Nietzsche himself called the "total economy of life" in *Beyond Good and Evil*.⁶²⁵ In other words, in his total economy of sexual drives, damming the drive in one place can only lead to a kind of store of social neuroses, such as those classic symptoms of *decadence*, nationalism and socialism, in another. Of such sublimation's, Nietzsche always singled out 'German philosophy' and the 'German's' for their special contribution to nihilism itself, but before I discuss this particular aspect of the literature I shall briefly look at some of the examples of the 'general economics of sexuality' that we find in Nietzsche's texts.

Reflecting upon the nature of the Dionysiac impulse he said, "In the Dionysian intoxication there is sexuality and voluptuousness",...⁶²⁶ And quoting from the final lines of Isolde's *liebestod*, from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, Nietzsche notes that the ... "way back to the womb of the sole true reality" is rapture and "supreme joy" [höchste Lust], which provide the final transfiguration into the great unconscious [Unbewußt] of the "primal oneness".

In *Zarathustra* there is, among many references to sex and sexuality, a very sensual account of a visit to a brothel which invokes such places as hot nihilistic wastelands of "good, clear, oriental air", where any concern with social history would be absurd, "no clouds and no thoughts are hung" save for the most basic sexual instinct.⁶²⁷

Wonderful, truly!
 Here I now sit,
 Beside the desert, and
 Yet so far from the desert,
 And in no way devastated:

and then comes the important sexual refrain,

For I am swallowed down
 By this smallest oasis:
 -it simply opened, yawning,
 Its sweetest mouth,
 The sweetest smelling of all little mouths:

⁶²⁵ Ibid, 1990, aporhism, 23.

⁶²⁶ Nietzsche, 1967, p420.

⁶²⁷ Nietzsche, 1969, p314, "Among the Daughters of the Desert".

Then I fell in,
Down, straight through- among you,
You dearest maidens! Selah.⁶²⁸

In *Beyond Good and Evil* there are countless references to the total economy of 'sickness' and 'health' and again, usually with reference to the store and discharge of sexual energy. For example, he says, "Disgust with dirt can be so great that it prevents us from cleaning ourselves- from 'justifying' ourselves".⁶²⁹ This concern with the self-overcoming of "disgust" is one of Nietzsche's more latent themes, sexuality, as it turns out, is one of the few ways in which this can be achieved. In another place he says "The sense of the tragic increases and diminishes with sensuality".⁶³⁰ Then, of course, there is the epigram with which I began this chapter, where he says, "The degree and kind of a man's sexuality reaches up into the topmost summit of his spirit".

However, it is in the relatively uninhibited self-analysis of his 'autobiography', *Ecce Homo*, that we are given the most personal glimpse into Nietzsche's sexology of degeneracy and health. Although even here one should note that self-analysis can never reveal everything of a person, "I am one thing, my writings are another" he says.⁶³¹ In any case, the "abyss", according to Nietzsche, is the final victory of *decadence* i.e. nihilism, and represents the ground gained through *ressentiment* and the slave mentality- thus in one of his most painful analogies, he invokes this condition in a comparison with the "absolutely hellish machine" which is at work in his mother and his sister.⁶³² His sister, whom he called elsewhere an "anti-Semitic goose", represented and embodied the moral humbug and modern degeneracy of petty *ressentiment* that he loathed most.

According to Nietzsche, *ressentiment* is "Vexation, morbid susceptibility, incapacity for revenge, the desire, the thirst for revenge, poison-brewing in any sense", and such impulses are most dangerous, he says, in one who is "exhausted".⁶³³ There seems to have been at least some basis for Nietzsche's negative assessment of his sister. Elizabeth Förster Nietzsche married an anti-Semitic pamphleteer and attempted to set up an Aryan colony in Paraguay, a project that Nietzsche loathed. Perhaps even worse, in her later years Elizabeth

⁶²⁸ Ibid, 1969, pps.315-6.

⁶²⁹ Nietzsche, 1990, aphorism 119.

⁶³⁰ Ibid, 1990, aphorism 155.

⁶³¹ Nietzsche, 1992, p39.

⁶³² Nietzsche, 1992, p11.

⁶³³ Nietzsche, 1992, p15.

expressed her admiration for Hitler, who's own autobiographical history would undoubtedly have made him a prime candidate as one who was suffering from Nietzschean *ressentiment*. Finally, it is also known that Elizabeth demonstrated little regard for honourable scholarly conventions, forging many letters that she claimed that her brother had sent her and suppressing those manuscripts of Nietzsche's that she did not like or understand.⁶³⁴

Nietzsche, on the other hand, felt himself to be "so wise" precisely because he understood the sickly catharsis of one who was himself a *decadent*, he himself suffered greatly, so he was one who understood "illness" from the inside, as it were. *Daybreak*, his "brightest book" he tells us, was produced "In the midst of torments" and during an "uninterrupted three-day headache" which was "accompanied by the laborious vomiting of phlegm".⁶³⁵ He composed and created life-affirming works "tenaciously for years on end [in] almost intolerable situations, places, residencies, [and] company" he says.⁶³⁶

When Nietzsche turns to a system of health, albeit in a rather heavy-handed metaphorical style of self-parody, his thoughts turn to the special role of the Germans in his account of nihilism. The German's always occupied a special position in Nietzsche's demonology and they always produced his most vehement loathing. When Nietzsche turns to "diet, place, climate and recreation" in his analysis, the economics of creativity are determined by an aversion to heavy German "puddings" and "Leipzig cookery", [Schopenhauer], "vegetarianism" [Wagner], wine and beer [the German herd] and undisciplined snacking between meals [which might conceivably just be snacking between meals!].

For a 'healthy' climate Nietzsche turns away again from the German, for ... "the German climate alone is enough to discourage strong and even heroic intestines".⁶³⁷ Here "metabolism" is again invoked as the key libidinal category, a metabolism which can be slowed or speeded up according to "climate". Here Nietzsche is looking, as in the case of the nihilistic brothel, for "dry-air", the kind of air which is to be found in "Paris, Provence, Florence, Jerusalem and Athens", says Nietzsche. Of course, Paris is the heavy-handed clue that these cities are but metaphors since Nietzsche knows that we know that Paris enjoys a damp, wet and

⁶³⁴ For a full account of Elizabeth's attempt to set up an Aryan colony see Ben MacIntyre, *Forgotten Fatherland: the search for Elizabeth Nietzsche*.

⁶³⁵ Nietzsche, 1992, p9.

⁶³⁶ Ibid, 1992, p16.

⁶³⁷ Ibid, 1992, p24.

grey climate, not unlike that of most of Northern Germany, we are led to it and the other regions mentioned for other reasons, indeed not for climate but for the important role that such centres have played as producers of cosmopolitan culture and artistic lightness of touch.⁶³⁸

Nietzsche was "so clever altogether" because he learned to avoid 'geographical' locations such as Basel, and anywhere in Germany if possible, which had proscribed for him a "spiritual diet" of classical philological over-reading which, ... "was a perfectly senseless abuse of extraordinary powers without any kind of provision for covering this consumption, without even reflection on consumption and replacement", says Nietzsche.⁶³⁹ In other words, according to Nietzsche's map of his own psyche, the purpose of such philology was lost to the moderns, the seriousness of cultural issues was lost to a mechanised schooling for the reproduction of the modern bourgeoisie.

In effect, Nietzsche is complaining that the narrow specialisation of the field implied in this process was undermining his own libidinal energies because he could no longer draw on 'life' in all its richness, or in the "total economy..." as such.⁶⁴⁰ Finally, and here there is little that can be added to the theme more generally, comes the turn of "recreation", where upon Nietzsche returns to some of his favourite enthusiasms, principally those of music and walking. Music remains for Nietzsche the crucial Schopenhauerean form of the plastic arts, and walking, he associated with high Alpine summits, again the "dry air", hygiene and honesty [elevation] of soul and spirit.

In the working notes [the *Nachlass*] which spanned much of the period under consideration here (1883-88), and which have come to be known as *The Will to Power* there are over twenty-five aphorisms, some shorter, some longer, which are concerned with issues of sexual energy. Of these I have selected just two which are of relevance here, the first concerns the creative power of the artist and the second concerns value-judgements. Of the artist and sublimation Nietzsche says,

Artists, if they are good, are (physically as well) strong, full of surplus energy, powerful animals, sensual; without a certain overheating of the sexual system a Raphael is unthinkable,...

⁶³⁸ Nietzsche, 1992, p27, in this regard he names Molière, Corneille, Racine as well as Paul Bourget, Pierre Loti, Gyp, Meilhac and Anatole France.

⁶³⁹ Ibid, 1992, p25.

⁶⁴⁰ For a more general critique of bourgeois society, including one which overlaps with his concern here, see aphorism 206 in *Daybreak*, entitled "The impossible class".

and he continues,

...chastity is merely the economy of an artist.⁶⁴¹

Nietzsche, wholly 'anticipating' Freud, views the total sexual drive of a person the measure of their self-power.⁶⁴² Those that are creative rather than reactive are so because they have a superabundance of such energy and will, therefore, sublimate in acts which are either active or reactive. It follows therefore, that those who do not enjoy such sexual powers are forced to conserve what they have and in so doing become resentful, miserly and ultimately, in Nietzsche's terms, 'destructive'. Thus Nietzsche, displaying his usual deftness when handling playful and metaphorical allusions and ironies, calls sexuality the "basic biological question".⁶⁴³ For those with a superabundance of sexual energy there must be some kind of libidinal release, whether of art or violence, it is clear that Nietzsche ideally prefers the former.

Nietzsche, as we have seen, frequently uses highly stylised sexual allusions and metaphors to draw attention to the total economy of drives and another good example is to be found in his theory of criminality. Nietzsche, going 'beyond good and evil' considers that crime might well be committed for the right reasons, and therefore, that such a criminal might well be courageous rather than resentful. Nietzsche notes, for example, that Dostoevsky held that the inmates of the Siberian prisons "...formed the strongest and most valuable part of the Russian people".⁶⁴⁴

However, should the criminal belong to the "race of criminals", in other words, should he be filled with *ressentiment*, of the criminal 'type', then Nietzsche suggests that "one should make war on him before he has committed any hostile act (first operation as soon as one has him in one's power: his castration)".⁶⁴⁵ Here, of course, a petty criminality which is rooted in popular *ressentiment* is held to have a

⁶⁴¹ Nietzsche, 1968, p421.

⁶⁴² I have placed 'anticipating' in inverted commas because it is, of course, Freud who follows Nietzsche here, in his *Three Essays on Sexuality*, Freud seeks to distance himself from C.G.Jung and in doing so also aligns himself firmly with Nietzsche and against those who would interpret the "will to power" as a general theory of drives, although this was hardly Freud's intention. He said, "For the present, therefore, no further development of the libido theory is possible, except upon speculative lines. It would, however, be sacrificing all that we have gained hitherto from psycho-analytic observation, if we were to follow the example of C.G.Jung and water down the meaning of the concept of libido itself by equating it with psychical instinctual force in general", 1975, p84.

⁶⁴³ Nietzsche, 1968, p26.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid, 1968, p392.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid, 1968, pps. 391-2.

sexual grounding in the inability of the criminal mind to discharge of an abundance of sexual energy in more psychologically appropriate and useful ways. The criminal, by definition, transgresses the laws for the wrong reasons. In other words, Nietzsche is implying, presumably, through the metaphorical removal of the criminals testicles, that his sexual energy must be reduced or removed altogether, since the criminal does not know how to discharge.⁶⁴⁶

In a second aphorism on sexuality Nietzsche jots down some notes on the theme of morality and genealogy, one of his most relentless themes. Noting that moral problems are often judged by a somewhat sleepy and acculturated ignorance and by passive acceptance, again related to religious conventions of one kind or another he said,

The problem "thou shalt": an inclination that cannot explain itself, similar to the sexual drive, shall not fall under the general condemnation of the drives; on the contrary, it shall be their evaluation and judge.⁶⁴⁷

Here then Nietzsche breaks the rules and conventions of society into two different components, particular laws and law *as such*. In Nietzsche's view the notion of the law *as such* is fundamental to the operation and vitality of the particular laws. Thus even when the moral grounding of the particular laws change, as they do with the cultural disintegration in the "belief in God", the ultimate law command position, or meta-law that holds that laws are necessary in the first instance, must remain in place. The analogy with Nietzsche's theory of sexuality is instructive, for in the total economy of the drives, many drives may come and go, increase or diminish according to cultural and environmental factors, but the sexual drive as the ultimate evaluative tool must, in Nietzsche's view, remain fundamental to any critical project.

The discourse of libidinal economics charts the course of the symptom and the cure in the individual patient, from the neurosis itself through the therapy and towards the cure, as in the psycho-analytic tradition. History, in this case represented by Hegel or Hegelianism, stands in the way of a cure. Much like Stirner, Nietzsche does not believe that the Young Hegelians have gone far

⁶⁴⁶ If this seems a bizarre suggestion on Nietzsche's part then it must be recalled that there have been calls recently by certain criminologists for the chemical castration of repeat offending rapists. Thus one must assume that such criminologists believe that the rapists desire to overpower the victim has sexual origins.

⁶⁴⁷ Nietzsche, 1968, p156.

enough, however, unlike Stirner, Nietzsche claims that his more highly developed “sense of smell” to what was offensive about the Germans, picked up on the theme of reactive and active freedoms. Thus Stirner’s negative all consuming Ego, although an important turning point, is left behind in Nietzsche’s critique of nihilism.

In other words, Nietzsche’s discourse of nihilism or *decadence*, approached the cultural crisis of modernity within an analogous libidinal frame-work although through this critique of history. As is well known, according to Nietzsche, modernity was essentially nihilist because of the most profound crisis of values, however, Nietzsche also held that the dominant values of the epoch, the “summit of the spirit” which was held to be the achievement of Hegel and the German spirit, was nothing less than the most *decadent* product of modern “sexuality” in various modes of denial, decline and its *philosophical* sublimation’s.

Furthermore, this is also why Nietzsche’s antagonistic approach towards the “Germans” was always more shrill, more hysterical than that which he meted out to any other individual or culture, and this is the most important point, while the seething undercurrent of drives represents the ‘eternal’ in Nietzsche’s thought, the growth and development of cultural variation and the so-called ‘civilising’ virtues are ‘historical’ and contingent factors which regulate the “will to power” in his view.

As is often well known but little understood, Nietzsche never failed to attach great ‘subjective’ significance to the personal views, moral outlook and ethical predispositions of the philosophers. Philosophy, according to Nietzsche, is never a series of objective meditations or wholly abstract discussions on distant objects and theoretical principles. Rather, philosophy is simply the most complex mask of these same predilections, moral presuppositions and ethical principles.

It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir...⁶⁴⁸

Finally, in his essay *On the uses and disadvantages of history for life*, it is clear that Nietzsche held Hegel largely responsible, as the founder of history as the “world-

⁶⁴⁸Nietzsche, 1990, p37.

process",⁶⁴⁹ for the final articulation of "modern man", or as Nietzsche was to call him in both *Daybreak* and in *Zarathustra*, the "last-man".⁶⁵⁰ Thus the "last man", egalitarian, fat and satisfied with his state handouts, soft, secure and comfortable life is suffering from a "weakened personality".⁶⁵¹ It is just because the last man is so comfortable that he is unable to reinvigorate life with a goal, he arrogantly surveys history with divine omnipotence and concludes that there is nothing left to be achieved, thus taking his cue from Feuerbach, Nietzsche says of Hegel, he was the "delayer" of atheism "par excellence".⁶⁵² Hegel's own personality was deeply Christian ascetic, according to the rules of Nietzsche's general economics.

⁶⁴⁹ *Untimely Meditations*, 1988, p111.

⁶⁵⁰ See *Daybreak*, 1989, p65, and *Zarathustra*, 1969, p45. And note that Hollingdale translates the *Letzte mensche* as "Ultimate man", Kaufmann's "last man" is better because ultimate man is too close to superman in English and is misleading.

⁶⁵¹ UTM, 1988, p83

⁶⁵² Nietzsche, 1974, pps.306-7.

To breed an animal *which is able to make promises*- is that not precisely the paradoxical task which nature has set herself with regard to humankind? is it not the real problem of humankind?...

Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*⁶⁵³

...if only the higher-ups constantly legitimise themselves as higher...

Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*⁶⁵⁴

III

Eschatology and *Übermensch* as 'privileged standpoint'

Nietzsche went much further in his own version of philosophical and political eschatology than either Stirner or Marx. For while Stirner and Marx posited a *particular* eschatological solution in each case; the *Lumpenproletariat* and the *Proletariat*, Nietzsche is much more radical in his eschatological claims since he sought to elevate eschatology *per se*, that he did so, like all post-Hegelians, in the service of atheism really goes without saying. Nietzsche hoped to provide a model of legitimisation, not for a particular historical agency, but one which was suitable for *all* historical agency. The *Übermensch* is not an particular individual or class but the post-historical 'privileged standpoint' raised up to the status of truth *per se*. A process began by Stirner and completed by Nietzsche.

The background to all of this then, according to Nietzsche, is provided through an analysis of general economics in which the constitution of nihilism is understood as the final death throws of Christian asceticism (Hegel). However, according to Nietzsche, nihilism was a dangerously "quiet problem" because Christian asceticism had successfully re-directed the cultural direction of suffering and of *ressentiment* inwards towards the sinful self.⁶⁵⁵ Thus Nietzsche held that before him the question of good and evil and good and bad had hardly ever arisen. All of this emerges from Nietzsche's general economics which places all such re-directional projects in the category of sexual sublimation. Nietzsche, like all

⁶⁵³ Nietzsche, 1995, p38.

⁶⁵⁴ Nietzsche, 1974, p107.

⁶⁵⁵ Here I am paraphrasing from Ansell-Pearson, 1995, pxix. Also see Nietzsche, 1995, p15 for reference to the "quiet problem". Also see Nietzsche, 1992, p99, "In the general economy of the whole the fearfulness of reality (in the affects, in the desires, in the will to power) are to an incalculable degree more necessary than any form of petty happiness"...

eschatologists, concluded from this that such a culturally ubiquitous phenomenon as *decadence* required a special condition of belief in something 'other' still to come, if the downward spiral of nihilism itself was to be broken.

Nietzsche hoped to expose the "quiet problem" of nihilism and its genealogy with the exuberance, excess and noise of the prophet.⁶⁵⁶ However he was not and did not want to become, in his own words, a ... "fear inspiring.. moral fanatic" in the manner of a de-theologised George Eliot so he faced the difficult problem of how to open up the question of morality without being moral and truth without presenting a new truth.⁶⁵⁷ It could be argued here that Nietzsche managed to overcome this problem through the use of his general economics, which would appear to have a quasi-physiological and psychological basis in sexuality but as we have seen, Nietzsche also holds to the view that cultural phenomena impinged upon such drives, subverting their health. However, a more serious problem for Nietzsche remained the necessary self-legitimation of the bearer of the eschatological truth, especially since Nietzsche's own 'truth' appears to be based on 'untruth'. This problem is most famously demonstrated in *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he says,

What really is it in us that wants 'the truth'?... Why not rather untruth? And uncertainty? Even ignorance?⁶⁵⁸

I would suggest that Nietzsche manages to overcome this problem by writing an eschatological account in the style of self-parody which is, nevertheless, supposed to be taken seriously *as* eschatology.⁶⁵⁹ The rather dubious celebration of self-parody which is engaged in by Nietzsche occurs in two of his most important texts, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Ecce Homo*. On the one hand, I take the seriousness of Nietzsche's intentions to have been already demonstrated by the context of his analysis of nihilism, which as we have seen already, forms the backdrop as *the* Nietzschean philosophical problem *par excellence*. However, on the other, the full ambiguity of Nietzsche's self-parody has still to be explored and in order to fully explore the function of self-parody in Nietzsche's thought it becomes

⁶⁵⁶ Even Kaufmann, so cautious in any designation of Nietzsche's thought said of him that he [Nietzsche] thought of himself as "a kind of prophet", see *The Gay Science*, p21.

⁶⁵⁷ Nietzsche, 1968, p69.

⁶⁵⁸ Nietzsche, 1990, p33.

⁶⁵⁹ Here I describe *Zarathustra* to be self-parody because I take Zarathustra to be Nietzsche. I think this view can be supported by reference to the values of both *Zarathustra* and the analysis of Nietzsche's own sickness and health in *Ecce Homo*. A book which is supposed to be Nietzsche's autobiography.

necessary, in turn, that we briefly explore what I will call his 'micro-economics' of laughter.⁶⁰⁰

The discussion of the philological function of laughter presents itself in many of Nietzsche's texts, but probably finds its most extended treatment in *The Gay Science*. In Nietzsche's thought laughter has three distinctive functions; first, laughter breaks through tensions within the individual subject, secondly, it presents the opposite of its subject more seriously than before the laughing event and finally, it breaks down tensions that may pertain between subjects. Ultimately, Nietzsche is able to present his untruth, as one among many to be sure, but one which is more perspicacious than any other.

In a discussion of the first kind Nietzsche points out in *The Gay Science* that a man "needs a rest from himself". Meaning supposedly, that if one is serious all of the time then one becomes moody, gloomy, perhaps morbid, and again, the worst of all possible cases according to Nietzsche, one becomes resentful. Rather, he says, we should wear the "fools cap... precisely because we are at bottom grave and serious human beings", thus he continues "we need it in relation to ourselves", indeed we are more like "weights" than men.⁶⁰¹ More importantly, and this is an example of laughter and its 'other', Nietzsche suggests that laughter is a means to "artistic distance" and that the "hero needs a fool". It would appear that for Nietzsche, the heroic would be impossible to define if it were not for its opposite in the cowardly (or stupidity), but while that may be a logical truth it is not Nietzsche's main concern. Rather, how does one challenge the seriousness of untruth without providing an opposing truth commitment?

For example, in choosing the title of his 'autobiography', *Ecce Homo*, the words used by Pilate on the presentation of Christ before him, Nietzsche undoubtedly sought to shock his audience, and it certainly had the desired effect on his Sister, who we know suppressed the manuscript for a number of years. The comparison with Christ was also present in Zarathustra's *Prologue*, when Zarathustra, then aged thirty, goes off into the wilderness, an obvious reference to the life of Christ. This desire to shock is, however, not just the shrill expression of the lonely and despised outsider, as has often been suggested by some commentators, but a useful rhetorical device. Nietzsche, in presenting himself as a

⁶⁰⁰ It is worth noting that one could just as well explore this self-parody equally efficiently through his micro-economics of histrionics, play-acting or multiple masks, however I have chosen laughter in the case which follows.

⁶⁰¹ Nietzsche, 1974, p164.

new Christ invites one of two responses; either we are to take him as a new prophet or he is quite simply mad.

Let us assume that he intends to encourage the former view, that is, that he is a new prophet. Immediately we see a tension and its associated anxiety arise between Nietzsche and his audience. A religious audience, if not all audiences of the period, would be likely to regard such claims as blasphemy. Then comes our second and more important response to Nietzsche's claim that he is a new Christ; following anger and surprise the second response would be likely to be one of laughter, that it's all a big joke at his own expense, after all, he cannot be serious. Also, and this is important, laughter is an involuntary affect, that is to say that it has a physiological basis, and Nietzsche would want to communicate his truths to those who had the 'stomach' for them i.e. the requisite physiology since these are part of the general economy of the person.

However, in breaking the tension through the mechanism of laughter Nietzsche has now achieved a new intimacy with his formerly hostile audience, they forgive the joke, or at least suspend judgement on the blasphemer and he recognises their new receptivity, thus the relationship can now proceed in earnest. In this act of suspension the audience is now in a position to appreciate that, at the very least, if Nietzsche is not serious about being another Christ then he must be serious about something. Nietzsche, for his part, is now in a perfect position to present to them *his* serious issue and as we might expect the serious issue has a deep and profound Christ relation; that is, either take Christ seriously, Nietzsche would hold that few Christians do so,⁶⁶² or find some new goal. That goal being the re-evaluation of all values which was the whole point of Nietzsche's life work, after all, let us not forget that *Ecce Homo* is an intellectual retrospective of his life. "*Nititur in vetitum: in this sign my philosophy will one day conquer*",⁶⁶³ he said in *Ecce Homo*.

In short then, even laughter is a serious affair for Nietzsche. Indeed the idea that laughter cannot have a serious function is just one more social "prejudice", he said.⁶⁶⁴ Nietzsche's self-parody is not a means to the denial of eschatology and prophecy, rather, it is a means to making it more effective. As he

⁶⁶²Nietzsche, 1969, pps40-1, for example where the ascetic in the forest is saluted by Zarathustra for his unquestioning faith in God. Also, in *The Anti-Christ*, 1968, (AC) Nietzsche said, "...in reality there has been only one Christian, and he died on the Cross", p151.

⁶⁶³Nietzsche, 1992, p4, We strive after the forbidden (Ovid).

⁶⁶⁴Nietzsche, 1974, p257.

said in Zarathustra, "Who among you can at the same time laugh and be exalted?" and most trenchantly of all he has the following words come from the mouth of Zarathustra, "One does not kill by anger but by laughter. Come, let us kill the spirit of Gravity".⁶⁶⁵

Finally, returning to the Nietzschean political positions with which I began this chapter, we are able to see that these are not simply the ill-informed opinions of one who little understood the facts of modern life or those of someone who simply read his philosophy of power into political claims. The picture is certainly far more complex than this. Nihilism was the deepest human crisis, according to Nietzsche, and it was manifest in modern politics as it was in all other human relations and even in the sexology of individual persons, as is well known, Nietzsche held that liberalism, democracy, socialism and nationalism, were all such expressions. These were all manifestations of Christian pity and Christianity threatened to purge all such societies of "master morality", i.e. it threatened to suppress those who enjoyed a superabundance of drives, particularly the sexual drive and its sublimation's, at the expense of life *per se*. All of these modern 'isms', including feminism, were in Nietzsche's view a cultural disaster of apocalyptic proportions.

More importantly, however, was the "quiet" nature of this same nihilism in which each of these modern political forms, which were supposed to be opposites, were actually engaged in the deepest possible collusion. Nietzsche detested capitalism because it used people for the most vulgar of purposes; making money, and the state according to Nietzsche, was the most dangerous development of all precisely because it was the most potent manifestation of this same collusion. Every one of these modern ideologies supported the state, (except anarchism of course, which Nietzsche understood as a variant of democracy and socialism).

Nietzsche's Geo-political views, such as they were, included a deep suspicion of Russia, a celebration of the promise of the USA and a deep foreboding for the future of Germany. The last of these, is of course, often taken to be further evidence of Nietzsche's prophetic power. That is, he correctly 'predicted' the role of Germany in something terrible to come. However, Nietzsche held Germany in special contempt for the role that its philosophers played in the development of nihilism, thus "Schopenhauer and Hegel were brothers who wronged one another as no other brothers had". Luther, Kant and Hegel were a cultural calamity according to Nietzsche because they were such creative proponents of Christian

⁶⁶⁵Nietzsche, 1969, p68.

pity. Hegel's system represented the apotheosis of this problem in Nietzsche's account. Nietzsche feared Russia because, according to the laws of his general economics, feudal Russia was a slumbering giant of total repression, harmless "Russian fatalism" might not always remain so irrelevant, he feared that it might eventually subliminate in disastrous fashion, perhaps by waging war on Europe and thereby destroying the 'Greek' in we Europeans.

Finally, in Nietzsche's account the USA and the other migratory lands represented a chance for the pagan in us to regain some ground, migration pitted man against nature in the most fearful of struggles and such activities acted like a gymnasium of the spirit, this fact plus the promise to mix the races as never before made the USA the most potentially spiritual of all countries. If one must draw conclusions from all of this then the most likely scenario suggests that in Geopolitical terms, Nietzsche believed that the USA ought to protect Germany against itself (through the migration of the German working-class) and Europe from Russia. And there is some indication that once this historical mission is complete then the US should disarm itself from a position of strength. Thus Nietzsche's politics definitively have nothing to do with Nazism. Nihilism however, precisely because of its collusive nature prevented conversion to the probity of these Nietzschean insights. Nietzsche, therefore, sought legitimisation for master morality in his philosophical critique as eschatological, in other words, it necessarily predicted the end of nihilism and the time of the *Übermensch*.

Nietzsche has only contemporaneous evidence (as opposed to actual historical evidence) of nihilism, since it is a matter of interpretation, the facts, as he knew more than anyone, do not speak for themselves. From this Nietzschean interpretation of the present (and past) a standpoint on the future suffused with new meaning, the time of the *Übermensch* emerges. Thus again, unlike Hegel, for whom prophecy is *ex eventu*, Nietzsche is rooted in present and future rather than in past and present. While we are at least able to judge Hegel's revelation by philosophical discussions over the meaning of such events as have already occurred, we are being asked again, as in the case of Stirner and Marx, to judge Nietzsche on the veracity of his promises concerning the future. Nietzsche's genealogical analysis of nihilism is a historical form, to be sure, but the conclusion drawn by Nietzsche from this is quite typically, unsound. The philosophical concept of nihilism, like alienation, is only an interpretation of history's events, it must be re-called, not history itself. Nietzsche's politics then, are revelations forward in time without *ex eventu* justification, but they are not without legitimacy since he regarded the belief

in the power of his prophetic statements persuasive enough to constitute a kind of legitimacy.

What is revealed in Nietzsche's analysis is the dissection of modernity, the expose of the "Last-Men" and the future, the overcoming of their decaying morality by the *Übermenschen*. This total philosophical anatomy is presented in less than four pages of Zarathustra's *Prologue*. All of Nietzsche's key concepts are compressed into as few pages, the idea that "God is dead!",⁶⁶⁶ the announcement of the coming *Übermensch*, the atheism of the new message, "I entreat you, my brothers, remain true to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of extra-terrestrial hopes!".⁶⁶⁷ And finally, remaining with the medical/psychological analogies with which this chapter began, within these same few pages we have mentioned the social 'neuroses' itself which is ultimately the problem, the most "contemptible, ...the last man",⁶⁶⁸ with his lazy, self-satisfied bourgeois conformism to the dominant social mores of the period.

There is no question that Nietzsche intended that we do take his political philosophy seriously, the whole point of all true eschatology is to galvanise belief, "Seeing that I must shortly approach mankind with the heaviest demand that ever has been made on it,"... he said in *Ecce Homo*.⁶⁶⁹ Nietzsche's political views may be grounded in his general economics, but in circuitous fashion, his call for master morality is legitimated in eschatology itself. However, given Nietzsche's consistent critique of all philosophy as but a sexual reflex of the philosopher he had to galvanise belief, not in a particular historical agency, "...I erect no new idols", which would certainly leave him open to accusations of self-contradiction, in other words we would simply point the finger at Nietzsche's own sexuality,⁶⁷⁰ but in agency *per se*. To do this his eschatology had to be one which produced difference while protecting agency as such, master-morality is just such a notion of a re-energised conception of agency.

In the forward to *Ecce Homo* already quoted from Nietzsche, following an important discussion of eschatology in which he claims that Zarathustra is no "preacher" or "seducer", Nietzsche quotes from his own writings at length, and note that he claims that "Within my writings my Zarathustra stands by itself", he said, and here I quote at length,

⁶⁶⁶Ibid, 1969, p41.

⁶⁶⁷Ibid, 1969, 42.

⁶⁶⁸Ibid, 1969, p46.

⁶⁶⁹Nietzsche, 1992, p3.

⁶⁷⁰This is, in effect, what Henry Staten does in his penetrating psychological reading of Nietzsche.

"Go away from me and guard yourselves against Zarathustra! And better still: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he has deceived you.

The man of knowledge must be able not only to love his enemies but also to hate his friends.

One repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil.
And why, then, should you not pluck at my laurels?

You respect me; but how if one day your respect should tumble? Take care that a falling statue does not strike you dead?

You say you believe in Zarathustra? But of what importance is Zarathustra?
You are my believers: but of what importance are all believers?

You had not sought yourselves when you found me. Thus do all believers; therefore all belief is of so little account.

Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only *when you have all denied me* will I return to you"....⁶⁷¹

In other words, it would appear that Nietzsche does not want followers and he does not want to found a religion in the manner of other prophets. Rather he wants everyone to dig deep and to find what they have within themselves, those that have the pre-requisite makings of master-morality such as an over-abundance of energy will emerge eventually. However, Nietzsche still cannot resist becoming the prophet since the desire to tell us that that being so, as he has told us all along, .."only when you have all denied me will I return to you".... Our faith in his own self-belief and in his new values, and that he will prove to be right in the end, remains the characteristic legitimating hallmark of the privileged eschatologist, and so it was with Nietzsche, as it was with Stirner and Marx.

⁶⁷¹Nietzsche, 1992, 6.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Modernity and the Messianic Rejection of 'Theory'

Karl Löwith once suggested that the German philosophical obsession with nihilism began with Max Stirner's legacy. In this thesis I have responded to this idea and furthermore, I have suggested that this concern with nihilism began in Hegel's thought and not just within Hegelianism. Indeed I have suggested that the interrelated themes, the death of God, the attempt to develop a self-legitimizing theoretical practice, the critique of German social and political development according to this same practice, the quest for meaning and the 'promise' of the future that this entailed, reached a crescendo in nineteenth century Germany. I argue that these developments are the result of a philosophical turn, a rejection of Hegel's system, and from his own detailed theoretical reply to the French Revolution in his *Philosophy of Right*.

More specifically, I have demonstrated the extent to which the prophetic political philosophy of Max Stirner, Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche is dominated by their own perceptions of one dominating problematic: the search for meaning in the light of social-recognition's negativity. This is the scarifying implication of an abstract principle of freedom, which is in turn, based upon the *historical* emergence of complete adult autonomy. Not the Kantian notion of autonomy as self-governance, but as the denouement of government *per se* because it seems to lead only towards a moral and ethical vacuum and the suspension of any real standard of judgement when applied in practice. The terror of the French Revolution has demonstrated that complete freedom can be contained within no boundary as social chaos and mass murder reign supreme. In short, freedom de-values itself, thus the full implication of social-recognition has to be significantly re-interpreted by each theorist in his turn.

In my analysis of nineteenth century German thought, at least when represented by Hegel, Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche, I hold that two theological concepts dominate the philosophical and political landscape: alienation and nihilism. Both concepts have a long genealogy, in the case of alienation we see that before its use as a common legal term of the medieval period, it was principally a religious term which denoted man's relationship, or lack of it, to God. However, it was Hegel who most effectively defined the modern use of the term alienation. In his account it refers to both a sense of self-estrangement from the world, from

oneself and from others, as well as an expression of one's objective personality. In so defining alienation we see how Hegel brings together insights from both religious anthropology and modern philosophy in his *Phenomenology* and system.

In the case of nihilism the picture is more complex. Seldom explicitly mentioned by name, it does never-the-less, appear to be apparent in Hegel's account of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. For in Hegel's analysis the History of Philosophy discovers Thermidor before it occurs in Politics. Represented by Diderot in his short work *Rameau's Nephew*, we see this phenomena demonstrated in the cold utilitarianism and one-sided rationality of the Enlightenment. Here reason is allegedly one-sided because it is only concerned with subjects as objects, and it appears to circumnavigate the essential human worth of subjects as such. All of this becomes cathartic in the exposure of a meaningless life and death in the violence between revolutionary subjects. Innocence and guilt lose their meaning during the Terror, as do good and evil. There remains only the corrosive effects of suspicion, says Hegel.

The point of all of this for the present thesis is that the destructive drive of critique, made possible only by Enlightenment and socially-recognitive freedom, drives towards a series of self-reviving projects in Hegel's most important epigones. Nihilism and Modernity, the title of this study, when used in this general non-Nietzschean sense, refers to the death of God and an end to the moral and ethical certainties entailed by organised religious structures. Nietzsche, of course, only subscribed to this sense of modernity in the most general sense since his understanding of nihilism can be traced back to the period of Socrates. However, it is the decisive case of the 'enlightened', progressive "Last-Man" which Nietzsche associated with Hegel's philosophy, and in the final analysis, it is Hegelianism that both frames his notion of the modern, and that which he balked at.

In any case, one important implication in all of this is that following the turning point I represent in the thought of Hegel's *thinking* on the Revolution, philosophy and politics become primarily concerned with practices of judgement and legitimisation. This turning point is generally held to be the province of Kant or Kantianism, however, Hegel marks this particular turning point far more dramatically than Kant ever did. While Kant's deism, his "categorical imperative" and the postulates of practical reason remain modestly within the boundaries of biblical tradition, Hegel's "Absolute Knowing" attempts to rework eschatology for the greater glory and advancement of philosophy *per se*. In other words, while Kant

appears to have given philosophical support to the formal religious content of the moral law, Hegel seeks religious support for the philosophy of freedom. These are very different projects.

In his *Early Theological Writings*, (and following Lukàc's analysis in *The Young Hegel*), we see in Chapter I how Hegel attempted to rescue Jesus and the Protestant tradition, which Hegel thought the most important attempt to build a purely moral religion, from what he perceived to be the 'positivity' of both the Jewish and Roman Catholic traditions. I mentioned a number of sources such as his essay *The Sermon on the Mount Contrasted with the Mosaic Law and with Kant's Ethics*, an early example of his attempt to preserve and transcend alienation. Hegel held that Kant failed to serve Jesus's teaching in-so-far as he accepted the notion of the diremption of the subject, and between the dualism of the need to obey the objectivity of positive law, and thwart individual inclinations and desires. The great personal merit of Jesus himself, suggests Hegel, is that in his critique of the Pharisees, for example, and their formal interpretation and account of the law, is his attempt to make 'duty' subjective and thus harmonise these apparent oppositions.

The point for Hegel in these youthful theological writings, is that commandments such as "Thou shalt not kill" should become superfluous in-so-far as Reason becomes so deeply felt so as to become a moral religion, i.e. one unencumbered by rituals, catechisms and superstitions. Only then will the full rationality and truth of religion *as such* present itself. In the case of his later theory of the modern state, Hegel holds that there has to be a deep personal identification, (and thereby the deepest possible integration, by the individual of her own interests, purposes and goals), with that of the State itself, if alienation is to be successfully transcended.

In the Introduction to this thesis and in the Chapters on Hegel I flesh out the nature of Hegel's eschatology more fully. We see, for example, that Hegel's analysis remains *ex eventu*, that is, he plays the role of the revelatory prophet only 'after the fact'. Hegel's apocalyptic imagination remained within an empirical and interpretative conceptual framework which looked only to the present and past for self-legitimation. Hegel asks his audience to believe in the veracity of his 'End Time' based, not upon the strength of his belief in the eventual success of some correctly prophesied state of affairs to come, but upon the coherence and explanatory power of events which have already occurred, principally events such as

the various forms of non-recognition, mis-recognition and finally upon the mutual or social-recognition that we see in the opening Chapters. In other words, Hegel's revelation is his bringing to light the past nature of mankind's alienation and the emergence from that alienation. In the case of Hegel, the struggle over interpretative terrain remains firmly within the Western epistemological tradition since disputes over the validity of his narrative are the preserve of philosophical history.

However, when we come to consider Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche, we see that a decisive break occurs in the manner of the proceedings. Stirner prophesies the coming of Egoism based *not upon the consciousness of the lumpenproletariat*, but upon the self-confirming validity of his Egoistic consciousness; Marx prophesied the coming of a communist man based *not* upon the consciousness of the proletariat but upon his own consciousness, and its method, and finally Nietzsche required an *Übermensch* in order to break free from what he perceives to be the mediocrity of modernity, a mediocrity which is in turn defined by the presence of the prophet himself. In what amounts to a blanket rejection of Hegel's attempt to close his system, the allegedly contemplative Hegelian "self-thinking idea" becomes yet another version of an alienated or nihilistic consciousness, depending on which of our Young Hegelians we turn to.

This is all a far cry from Hegel's account of the content and significance of our religious beliefs. In Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion* the triadic structure of the Holy Trinity finds its analogy in the objects of 'life', in Hegel's special sense. Thus the 'Holy Ghost' is the collective worldly realisation of the community, the 'Son' is the process of representation and appearance of the same, as is the presentation of the Creation, it is the Fall and the final reconciliation. Finally, God is the 'Father', who is in-and-for-himself, he/she is self-development *as such*, the "self-thinking idea" of the later *Encyclopaedia*. In Hegel's thought, ultimately, there is little room for either alienation [Entfremdung] or nihilism.

However, following Hegel, conceptions of crisis dominate and these become dramatically diffuse because in each individual thinker's case, contingent contemporaneous sociological, empirical and conceptual frameworks vary widely. For example, Nietzsche's Schopenhauerean metaphysical assumptions and philological methodology is quite unlike Marx's [sometime] empirical studies of the economy, or even of Stirner's racialized and metaphorical Hegelian historiography. Yet a number of basic modern assumptions and concerns remain true of each. All

but Hegel unequivocally accepted the death of God event and each sought to find some form of eschatological legitimation for their *prophetic* standpoints. In a mirror image of Hegel's "Absolute Knowing", each of them proposes some alternative model of the 'privileged standpoint' which is consonant with prophetic political agency. Despite some differences of approach therefore, I demonstrate that Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche were best understood within this 'German' context of crisis and agency.

The subtitle of this thesis is *Political Response* in a Godless Age, however, this study is not intended to be an in-depth comparative analysis of the respective political theories of four major European thinkers. Rather, *political response* refers only to the eschatological method of legitimation which was common to these particular thinkers and their times. Therefore I only touch on the prophetic utterances of Stirner (the Union of Egoists), Marx (the Communist society) and finally, Nietzsche (the era of great-politics), where such ideas might demonstrate something valuable with regard to the eschatological method of presentation by each.

However, as we clearly see, and this is an important point, each prophetic theory did assume some level or other of non-freedom or an implicit account of restrictions upon the movements, beliefs and practices of individual agents. Although a more complete reading of freedom in the case of Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche is beyond the scope of the present thesis, a version of what freedom *is*, is strongly implied by each in the mere fact of the continuation of alienation [Entfremdung] and nihilism. (Do not forget that according to Nietzsche *decadence* hobbled individuals every bit as much as alienation did for Stirner or Marx, but in a very different sense). In other words, in each case some normative definition of freedom lurked behind such analyses. Also, this demonstrates that although Hegel sought closure to alienation [Entfremdung] only to face nihilism, we can also see that there is some conceptual overlap, historically speaking, between these two concepts. Alienation continues to be an issue for all of the Young Hegelians and for Nietzsche, although in Nietzsche's case alienation as such is closely interwoven with nihilism. However, in Nietzsche's case 'alienation' appears to be part of the human condition whereas nihilism is historical, the latter not the former, constitutes an ontological perversion of man's true essence.

Returning to the question of the 'privileged standpoint' *vis à vis* this conception of *political response* I asked: how is it possible that an non-alienated prophet could understand the hieroglyphics of freedom in the first instance? In the

case of Hegel the suggestion is that the unfolding richness of the "Absolute Idea" was constitutive of this same standpoint. Thus Hegel's political theory would have to run parallel with the 'evidence' for this retrospective or *ex eventu* claim. A prophetic claim of the other type is something else again. Whether one thinks Hegel was successful or not in his distinctive fusion of religion and philosophy I have attempted to present a case in which the logical consequence of Hegel's political philosophy should not and did not rule out political theory of a traditional kind, not so in the case of some of his followers. The point is that the *political response* in question to which I referred is less the detailed proscriptive policies that each thinker held to, than it is the internal logic of their respective accounts and how their philosophical premises underpinned their political assumptions.

Furthermore, we also see, with the possible exception of Hegel, that these proscriptive policies, limited and sketchy though they are, are largely dated and uninteresting. One only has to recall Stirner's individualistic "rebellion", Marx's relatively reformist demands, particularly those which he, Engels and the 'working-people's' committees made in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, or of Nietzsche's entirely reasonable Pan-European Geo-politics of sexuality. The notion of a messianic agency might well appear to be the more exciting since it awaits to surprise us when we least expect it, thus we are continually held in a condition of excited and expectant suspense. Such agencies, the socio-pathological *Lumpenproletariat*, the ruthless *Proletariat* and the dynamic *Übermensch*, continue to exert a strong but misplaced fascination, they continue to command our attention in the same manner as the character development in a superlative work of fiction might. But such political agencies do not constitute political theory in the rich tradition of 'Western' political thought from Hobbes to Hegel. Rather, Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche constitute a definitive break with this tradition.

This rejection of the 'Western' tradition of political theory, I call 'post-historical' existence. This concept we see has little to do with the notion that in one way or another, liberal capitalist democracies represent the final evolutionary moment of economic and political development. Or even the idea that history has stopped, slowed down or become *post-histoire*. Rather, my conception of 'post-historical' existence is Hegelian eschatological time, an 'End Time' in which the world is stalked by spiritual disaster, arising in turn from various damaging false forms of consciousness. Thus, in each of our prophetic thinkers we see an attempt to 'kick-start' history, in each there is an attempt to change history by changing

social-consciousness, not through ever more complex and sophisticated models of socialisation, as in the case of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, but by effecting a massive cataclysmic shift in the belief systems of society.

To return to cases, we see that Stirner's *political response* to the death of God was to postulate that dissident intellectualism (probably including Stirner himself), and "vagabondism" (thieves, paupers, prostitutes and cast outs, the *lumpenproletariat*) could create a deep-seated social rebellion without positing an historical subject beyond Egoism *per se*. Such people, it might be thought, had nothing to lose and everything to gain. However, Stirner is faced with the difficult problem of how to legitimate his own 'privileged position' as a bearer of Egoist Self-Consciousness, and how that Self-Consciousness can be inscribed into his chosen messianic social agents, put more simply, how can he explain that it had come about that he is an Egoist and they are not?

The uninteresting answer to this question is that he had read Hegel and they have not, but such a position would only serve to legitimate Hegel not Stirner. As we see Stirner founded a new anarchistic conception of individualism, one that could bridge the gap between his own advanced Egoist consciousness and the apparent passivity and deference of the masses. In other words, Stirner has founded an Egoism on the sheer self-possessive capacities, or lack of them, of individual agents *as such*, as interpretative agents of their own interests. Such a minimalist account of individual sovereignty and obligation can hardly fall foul of even the most impassive and helpless of societies unfortunates. Thus his explanation would appear to be irrefutable since even the most morbid symptoms of social pathology can be viewed, in this schema, as some kind of existential lifestyle choice, in other words, as a reliable measure of that individuals self-capacities of power.

We also see that Stirner's contemporaries Feuerbach and Bauer have posited two interpretative improvements in the wake of Hegel's post-historical "Absolute Idea". The first of these is the notion of "species-man" and the second is unlimited "critique". Stirner, however, considers both of these concepts unfinished business. Stirner considered Feuerbach's "essence" simply a further alienation of the Ego and he thought much the same of Bauer's notion of "critique". In effect, he argues that both of these amounts to nothing less than new forms of fetishism. As such these ideas remain pseudo-religious concepts that modernity must outgrow. We see that in Stirner's account Hegel's "Absolute Idea" remains an abstraction and as far as he was concerned only when an actual bearer of uniqueness emerges

would modernity properly so-called be fully accessed. To use one of Stirner's personal growth metaphors, modernity is the time of full "manhood". Thus the social agency of Egoism is the Hegelian "Absolute Idea" as agency. Unlike Fichte's metaphysical Ego, Stirner's concept is a form of direct realism, it was the individual *qua ne plus ultra*.

Löwith's account of the importance of Stirner in the history of ideas is not exaggerated, Stirner's *Der Einzige* plays a casting role in the development of post-Hegelian conceptions of modernity. The pace and progress of the dying God increases and intensifies with every advance in Young Hegelian critique, however, with the appearance of Stirner on the scene, this amounts to a series of mortal blows. The coming of Egoism, as Stirner develops it, stands at the end of one time and at the beginning of another. The past is relegated to the dark mists of time and superstition and the Ego steps out into the daylight of a new dawn. This dawn is an amoral world in which the self-possession and self-power of the Ego will decide the future course of all events. In short, Stirner marked the spot where alienation is supposed to have ended in reality and where nihilism proper really begun, according to this account.

Taking my cue from Gilles Deleuze I also hold that nihilism proper begins here because of the destructive energy of the Ego. Thus, with the absolute Ego the messianic entailments of Stirner's thought became apparent, for it is only through destruction and consumption that the Ego is able to preserve its freedom. Only through the constant destruction of all social mores, values and institutions could it constantly reaffirm its Egoism, as soon as it creates or posits anything of its own it immediately became a bondsman to that idea or institution. Its negativity would, in effect, become something less than absolute.

My reading of Stirner's place in intellectual history holds that Stirner's political philosophy is likely to produce a counter-reaction once the full thrust of his argument becomes more widely known, since Stirner's politics are as uncompromising as his Egoism. Stirner holds that only a loose association of Egoists is compatible with the 'absolute negativity' of the all-consuming rapacious Egoist, thus he opposes all the popular and not so popular institutions of his own day. He rejects the State, popular assemblies, all government, welfare institutions and all the political parties. Here it appears, that in his rejection of all the then current social and political institutions, that he lapses into a kind of political solipsism. Although I rejected this idea in Chapter III this is certainly Marx's understanding

and one of his claims concerning Stirner. More importantly however, is the wider Young Hegelian point that Hegel's "self-thinking idea" is but a form of religious contemplation that failed to revolutionise reality in harmony with the idea itself. Stirner appears to leave himself open to claims that his Egoism merely replicated this development. Never-the-less, Stirner's philosophy of negativity resolutely rejects political theory.

Turning to Marx, we see that Marx, despite claims to the contrary, remains firmly within this developing tradition of German idealism. An idealism which prioritised the operation of consciousness in history, an idealism which theorised an eschatological account of social development, which appears to unintentionally move towards ethical and value neutrality at best, and the conscious appropriation of nihilism at worst. Marx desperately seeks to avoid the worst of these excesses, but as we see, in his concept of Revolution he is less than successful. The most important interpretative point I make concerning Marx is that the deep cleavage he strikes between the notion of class-consciousness and that of class-membership is not peripheral to our understanding of Marx but central to his whole approach. The latter proved to be a largely irrelevant empirical detail in his thinking while the former concept, as one would expect from an idealist thinker, takes pride of place in his epistemology.

There is no question that Marx loathed Max Stirner's ideas and he devoted more critical energy in his attempted repudiation of Stirner than of any other individual thinker. In order to justify and legitimate his own Egoism, Stirner has to slice off those particular interests of society; those of the *Lumpenproletariat*, which best mirrors the condition of nihilism, with its unstable and fluid conception of absolute negativity. Marx, for his part, is left in the position of finding some ground for rejecting Stirner's chosen social agents of change. Marx remains a hostage to German idealism's fortunes in-so-far as he tries to find a solution to this problem, not in empirical analysis but by returning again and again to the question of the role of consciousness in human history. Marx seeks meaning in history where Stirner's thought now implied that there is none.

We see, therefore, that Marx is forced to re-apply Stirner's and the other Young Hegelians critique of Hegel, against Stirner himself. Thus while he holds that Stirner has hoped to revolutionise consciousness without revolutionising reality itself, this leads to something of a paradox in Marx's own thought: on one level Marx constantly refers to Stirner's idealist Ego as but a form of solipsism but more

importantly, in order to demonstrate this Marx has to constantly revisit that which Stirner has allegedly left behind, the notion of human alienation [Entfremdung]. Stirner's nihilism posits no social or collective meaning beyond the empty negative Hegelian conception of social-recognition in his "Union of Egoists" and as we see this argument only legitimates acts of destruction and consumption in minimalist social expressions of self-serving co-operation.

When I examined Hegel's analysis of the French Revolution I suggested that mutual or social-recognition was empty of positive content, meaning as such that it presented no normative content only an empty negative void which was as yet to be filled with positive deeds. In other words, social-recognition presented only the mutual-awareness *in* each of the negativity *of* each. Thus Stirner's *Lumpenproletariat* would only be likely to act as individual thieves, beggars and cheats as circumstances present themselves. Deception and deceit are certainly compatible with the naked self-power of individual negativity. As we see in Chapter IV, Marx, recoiling, is required to posit a social consciousness which rejects this analysis, committed as it is to an instrumental conception of human behaviour which amounts to nothing more than a version of bad faith. According to Marx, this is a kind of social agency which nothing good can come out of.

In stark contrast, Marx is forced to deny the nihilism of modernity and the Egoism of Stirner. Following his critique of Stirner, Marx returns to the promise of self-actualisation, but not in the Hegelian sense of Entäußerung, but in the sense of necessary cataclysmic change. We see this shift in emphasis, from individual conceptions of self-development to collective conceptions in *The German Ideology*. This text contains some of Marx's most constructive passages, such as the need for the ultimate mitigation of the affects of the social division of labour, the prospect of harmony from potential multiplicitous activities and the life-plans of social agents in communist society and so on. Never-the-less, Marx is aware that Stirner has effectively undermined the humanist grounding of Feuerbach's "species-being" which appears to underpin just such a project. Thus Marx is forced to take another route out of nihilism; I argue in this regard that like all the Young Hegelians, he takes flight in the self-legitimizing consciousness raising practices of an atheistic eschatology.

In other words, Marx takes the death of God seriously and his hope of a fully rational economic and social system is dependent upon this same demise. However, if God *is* dead as a cultural event, then the further alienation

[Entfremdung and Entäußerung] of man has to be re-staked and then overcome. In Marx's view this requires the return to a new concept of the "self-thinking idea". Taking his cue from August von Cieszkowski, Marx immerses himself in the philosophy of theory and practice. Like Cieszkowski, Marx accepts the mimetic relation between critique and practice and the further critique of that same practice and *its* critique. In other words, Marx takes Hegel's alleged philosophical relexivity and converts it into 'practical reflexivity', ripping into the heart of Hegel's system. From Hegel's "self-thinking idea" we see the concept metamorphose into "Praxis", the core concept of Young Hegelianism itself.

The method of praxis allows Marx to redefine Hegel's anatomy of human alienation. Marx reflexively examines social practices and categories and concepts such as 'work', and concludes that these are not fully rational according to his new standard, insisting that these must become fully universal. Since such social practices remain particular they must also be alienation's in his new sense. We see this analysis applied by Marx in the case of his critique of the utopian thinkers of the period. Marx holds that the work forms of Robert Owen, Adam Smith and Fourier fail to conform to the demands of genuine personal authenticity because in each case is posited a particular historical conception of work rather than the creative potential of man *per se*. Here we see Marx at his most Hegelian, where there are claims that particularity is a moment of alienation by definition because the agent fails to identify the reason immanent in the universal interest, thus also failing to identify personally with the self-objectification of reality. The reader may recall that Marx demonstrates that utopian notions of work, far from being open to the universal, hinge upon the contemporary whims and opinions which characterise the particular imaginations of the present, not the future, in Marx's view.

The point is made that this Young Hegelian methodology serves Marx well, he emerges from his analysis of utopianism and alienation with two new sources of social meaning; in the first case the death of God and the disenchantment of the world prepares the ground for full rationality in matters of economic, *political* and social life. Secondly, all such social action had to be planned in advance, modified in the light of its success and reconstituted again and again through future-oriented projects. In other words, the standards provided by alienation, as the basis of suffering and sufferings judgement, would be applied and re-applied. 'Planning' is not to be confused with so-called 'socialist planning' of the former Soviet variety. Rather, planning is broadly conceived as but the 'struggle' to appropriate the world for reason. Political theory as traditionally conceived becomes the first victim of this

analysis since, according to Marx, meaning itself is to be found in the political 'struggle' against capitalism and its institutions of law and so on. The latter is always particular, representing as it must the private interests of private property. As such it constitutes civil society and therefore, is irrational by definition. This does not mean that private persons cannot act rationally to maximise their particular interests, only that the social organism *as a whole* cannot act rationally since this would presuppose a genuine collective interest.

Thus this peculiar form of Hegelian rationality provided Marx with the bridge towards his identification of struggle with 'German' proletarian consciousness and the 'privileged position' of the theorist himself. Unlike Hegel's cleavage *between* both political society and civil society, Marx's new cleavage runs *through* both political society and civil society, in this way Marx is able to rejuvenate alienation and reload it with the suffering which Hegel had mitigated. We see how, in his early critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* Marx identifies the new emerging mass industrial army of workers as the social agents who will complete the French Revolution in its Germanic form. Once inscribed with the appropriate Self-Consciousness of themselves as the bearers of the universal interest, they prove the truth of Marx's own critique. In other words, in an argument which is as circular as it is seductive, Marx posits a denuded conception of philosophy in the Western tradition, praxis as the mailed fist, the legitimating power of his own strength of belief. The latter function is what Marx describes as a proletarian consciousness, a concept which is forged decisively against the empirical and sociological notion of class-membership.

However, because Marx attempts to make his own 'privileged position' viable only after the objective formation of this proletarian consciousness in history, it might be supposed that his thought is *ex eventu* in much the same manner as Hegel's. While this might appear to be true to a limited degree, the ultimate validity of Marx's interpretative role as the anatomist of the social hieroglyphics rests, in the final analysis, not on some historical or empirical fact, but on the persuasiveness of his own prophetic vision. This is because the truth of his analysis can only be demonstrated once the bearer of eschatological hopes, carries out their historic messianic role and produces a communist society. In other words, Marx's eschatological truth is cast forward and thus is held a hostage to fortune, but a fortune that can be forever held in a state of purgatory, according to the standard of judgement provided by his re-worked of concept of alienation. In this account,

suffering today is supposed to galvanise the strength of belief in the coming dawn of a newer and brighter tomorrow.

On the other hand, Marx is well aware of the fact that the growth of proletarian consciousness need not necessarily become eschatological. Class-consciousness might, for example, be expressed in various forms of political reformism. In this sense, both social democracy and socialism might well be thought of, before being dispatched by Stirner's critique of course, as modern responses to the death of God. However, following Stirner, Marx believes that neither social reformism nor utopian socialism can legitimate themselves after Stirner's Egoism. Marx, therefore, has to find his own legitimating theory of the 'last-things', this is to be found in his version of the final cataclysm: total social revolution.

I departed from Löwith's account of Marx in-so-far as he believes that the dominant factor in Marx's messianism was the Jewish tradition from which Marx's own family had sprung and thus he decisively rejected all eschatology. Throughout this thesis however, I have claimed that the tradition of German Idealism is itself the dominant element in Marx's conceptual schema. This is an important point when we come to consider Marx's concept of revolutionary change. As we see in Section II of the Introduction to this thesis, the Judeo-Christian tradition of apocalypticism is mystical in most cases, concerned with the past and with reconciliation. However in Marx's one-sided understanding the measure of prophetic belief is in the persuasive powers of deliverance. The revolution, of course, promises to deliver from alienation and suffering. Thus the revolution is cast forward, reconciliation is promised in the future not in the present or past. This has nothing to do with Marx's Jewish roots and everything to do with his idealist account of the power of ideas to change the world.

I argue that within the genre of apocalyptic literature there are two further refinements which are made; the first kind of apocalyptic literature is the kind of mystical narration which sought to reassure, and the second is that of temporal, horizontal and *ex eventu* prophecy which is written in the liturgical manner of "symbolic protest". I argue that Hegel's apocalypticism is closer in spirit to the classical Judeo-Christian tradition of apocalypse, a tradition which is rooted in past and present and which sought to reassure and find reconciliation. In the case of Marx, this classical account is dispensed with, as is the *ex eventu* nature of his claims in his rush towards the critical function of the 'privileged standpoint'.

In broad strokes, we see how Marx's concept of messianic social agency, prophetic literature (*The Manifesto of the Communist Party* and *Capital*) and the belief in the coming revolution, take him well beyond Hegel's own historical framework. Marx principally protests against the present and professes into the future. Although I have left Löwith's general sweep across German intellectual development largely intact, I have argued that the detailed trajectory of Marxism owed more to Stirner's radical idealism than it did to Hegel's re-working of religious eschatology. As long as there exists the possibility of social revolution by messianic agents then the ultimate validity of critique lies in waiting.

In my discussion of Nietzsche's *political response* in Chapter V, I demonstrate that despite his radical Pyrrhonism, his political ideas should not be, either dismissed as an embarrassment, or neglected because they were ill-informed. Rather, I claim that his political views, though they may have been limited and did not conform to the rich systematic standards of the Western tradition, did provide interesting insights into his understanding of the death of God, his critique of German development, *decadence*, the associated problem of political legitimacy and the quest for meaning.

It is seen that Nietzsche's libidinal understanding of human economy can be retrogressively teased out from these same political concerns (or as in the case of Henry Staten's work, from Nietzsche's own psycho-social development). This also implied that Nietzsche's prophetic form of delivery is also to be taken seriously and should not be interpreted as but another example of his literary playfulness because the prophetic form is an integral element of these same psycho-sexual politics. In the past the tendency has been to dismiss the politics as unworthy of consideration and the prophetic form as simply a cry for help from a desperate outsider trying to be heard. This was a role often acted out in his personal correspondence.

One of the most difficult problems to arise from Nietzsche's own analysis of nihilism is the self-refuting nature of this same analysis. I argue that this problem is most provocatively discussed in *Zarathustra* and in quite extended discussions in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Thus in Nietzsche's post-historical, political philosophising the problem of the self-legitimacy of the philosopher is more apparent than in the previous two cases examined, Stirner and Marx. This problem is more dramatically apparent in Nietzsche's case because, in keeping with his acceptance of nihilism's essential meaninglessness and the materialism of his libidinal economics, he holds

that all philosophy is, in truth, but an unconscious involuntary reflex of the philosopher, his pre-dispositions and inclinations. Thus, the question arises as to why we should believe Nietzsche's own account of the human condition or his critique of decadent values themselves? This turn towards seeking legitimacy in prophecy is all the more remarkable once one recalls that previous to this period, legitimacy, would be sought not in the form of a given philosophers views, but in judgements of an epistemological nature.

In any case, as we see, Nietzsche's route out of this paradox of self-refutation is to place his critique of decadence itself into the mouth of a prophet. At first this prophet is allegedly a fictional character, as it is in the case of *Zarathustra*, but as Nietzsche's 'philological' method becomes more sophisticated he extends his prophetic message into the biographical genre with *Ecce Homo*. Although even here the prophet remains fictional or pseudonymous to a degree. Indeed I imply in my analysis that *Zarathustra* might well be as autobiographical as *Ecce Homo* is fictional. In any case, it is also clear that the mechanism of self-parody which is so effectively mobilised by Nietzsche, is not mobilised in the service of his scepticism but in order to emphasise the complete seriousness of his millennialist claims concerning the age in which he lives and the options open to its people. In Nietzsche's account of Hegel's modernity, in particular, this message became more shrill as the deaf-ear of the loathsome "Last Man" reaches new levels of auditory insuperability.

In Nietzsche's libidinal economy only those 'strong' individuals who enjoy a superabundance of sexual energy are truly creative and not reactive. All of Nietzsche's artistic heroes enjoy such overflowing capacities, especially in the realm of sexuality. When it comes to politics, no less than artistic achievement, Nietzsche holds his *Übermensch* to account according to the principles of these same libidinal categories. Thus it is but one easy step to further include the 'prophet' in this psycho-sexual taxonomy. In examples of life's overcoming, Nietzsche cites among them, the need to overcome self-denial, self-disgust, unrestrained gratification, overwork, and inordinate quantities of self-moderation. We see that in Nietzsche's analysis of 'sickness' and 'health' that he is not averse to including a self-analysis of his own 'economy' as but an example of what rules true greatness must conform to. In other words, *Ecce Homo*, despite the obvious implications of the title, suggests that Nietzsche was to become the "bridge" to the future, as he described the process in *Zarathustra*. Much as John the Baptist paved the way for the coming of the Messiah so Nietzsche prepares the way for the coming of the *Übermensch*.

Of course, prophets found religions and Nietzsche made it quite clear that he had no intention of becoming one such prophet, and there is every reason to believe him. This could also be said of both Stirner and Marx for whom the status of quasi-religious leadership could only serve to provide a measure of how little they had been understood. But this fact alone would also mark out our three radical atheist eschatologists and their form of prophecy as being particularly unique, for as we also see in the Introduction, the notion of forming a new religion was not something new or strange to German Idealism, but was integral to its original development. No doubt influenced by the veneration of the Greek civil religion, Hegel's early writings were peppered with references to the need for a "religion of the senses", and for a "new religion" which would be "the last and greatest work of humanity". Also in Hegel's early theological writings we see there his concern with the complete lack of the kind of religious mythology which was suited to the needs of the people of central Europe. For Hegel the great meta-narratives of the Old Testament are true and good but the historical context made them too "positive". As alienation's these were all but unappreciable to modern Germans.

It is apparent throughout this thesis that Hegel, Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche, despite their many differences, are all concerned with the disenchantment of modernity. This is *the* problem which is principally constitutive of German Idealism as it emerges from the more theologically conservative Deism of the Enlightenment. But while Hegel's study of politics was informed by a prophetic rear-guard action on behalf of God, understood as a peculiar kind of freedom, and in the name of philosophy. Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche abandon philosophy. Instead they use the prophetic move forward to legitimate these same presuppositions, that is, those arising from God's demise, and this is the point: Hegel could, due to his religious understanding of the dialectical method, retain the option of trying to re-work Christian and particularly Protestant morality into the framework of his understanding of society as it already stood. Hegel always holds that Christianity is but the final form of freedom, we see this in the spiritual adventures of the *Phenomenology*. Thus, from this analysis Hegel produces a form of freedom as a type of *action* which is in harmony with Reason and Christian teaching. In Hegel's account Christianity only survives as a civic code of customs, practices and socialisation's which are able to fully reject alienating dogma. In other words, now that the inwardizing of the Christian message is made compatible with the world trajectory of Reason and freedom, its form can be abandoned. In Hegel's thought Christianity is dead and God is perhaps even dispensed with and forgotten, but God in Hegel's account, strictly speaking, is not dead.

On the other hand, following this same disenchantment we see that Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche face the much more difficult task of trying to inscribe life with new meaning, since all three understand the essential nihilism of this modernity in terms which leave no room for even the content of the Christian message. For each in his turn holds this Christianity is untenable without the theological dogma which underpinned it. Thus, it is a natural conclusion to draw that without Christianity there could be no God. Each in his turn then has to find some new account of human freedom and that freedom has to become self-supporting and self-legitimizing.

In the case of Stirner, the self-confirming power of the individual Egoist consciousness provides the self-legitimizing 'privileged standpoint' of negative freedom, and the world is thereafter one of the Egoist's future projects. Marx reacting to, as he saw it, Stirner's solipsistic individualism returns to the nature of alienation, re-invigorating the concept with new life and prepares an account of alienation's self-overcoming. To do this he requires a self-actualising account of freedom which rejects, what he sees as Hegel's 'Feuerbachian' religious existentialism, and he grounds freedom in a new belief structure which is galvanised through praxis and yet another version of what is privileged in the privileged standpoint.

Finally, while Nietzsche had little time for any account of alienation since he adheres to a form of Schopenhauerean metaphysic, still he holds that *decadence* or nihilism itself, crippled the 'strong' spirits who alone can give some new account of meaning. But without any empirical or phenomenological account of how this can be done, Nietzsche follows the dominant technique of his milieu and hopes to found his call for new values in the veracity of this same need in he who calls.

In conclusion, the most dominant theorists of post-Hegelian idealism have, during what I have termed 'post-historical existence', shied away from the kind of hard work, and thorough examination, of what *is*, for an eschatological 'short-cut' which is concerned with what *could* be. But they did not do this in terms which replicated the architecture of traditional normative or utopian thinking, (as we saw in the case of Marx especially, his conceptual categories are often formed in criticism of such thought), rather, our post-historical thinkers choose to adopt a specific form of atheized prophetic eschatology in which to deliver their *political response*.

Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche, eschewed the kind of pragmatic criticism, philosophy's "grey on grey" associated with Hegel, and turned instead to the politics of *vision*, but not one that is legitimated through traditional conceptions of epistemology, ontology, or which is based on a careful empirical analysis, they choose, rather, a highly specific religious conception of 'end-times' and of new possibilities. While it is often claimed that Marxism, to give but one example, is a form of religious belief without any 'scientific merits', this claim is often made by those who are opposed to Marxism primarily on ideological grounds, (I am thinking here of Karl Popper). Such critics tend to base their claims, not on the texts concerned, but on the political outcomes of actual history, these they relate, not to the principles of the political philosophy themselves but on the expediencies of actual historical figures such as Lenin, Stalin or Hitler. Yet only the most superficial of textual analysis could find some family resemblance between Hegel and Stalin, or between Nietzsche and Hitler, in this sense, the abandonment of political theory certainly plays out in favour of our post-historical trio. On the other hand, the *abandonment of political theory* which I have traced here clearly demonstrates some other important limitations which are perhaps less extreme than the actual failures of twentieth century history. Stirner, Marx and Nietzsche's denouement makes them appear quite dated *vis a vis* the challenges of our troublesome complex and resilient modern political structures since they would seem to have very little to offer in this regard. Hegel, it would appear, has more to say to us today concerning *our* particular problems.

I hope that I have demonstrated in this thesis that a disenchanted and secular eschatology is the very stuff of post-Hegelian German Idealism, a form of idealism which did not end with Stirner but which carried on through to Nietzsche himself. As it progresses this idealism becomes increasingly shrill and apocalyptic as it also becomes in almost equal measure more prophetic. In the first one hundred years since the last of its theorists put pen to paper, such eschatology might be thought of as having enjoyed a success that it could scarcely have imagined and an even more dramatic decline than would have been thought possible, even by them themselves in their most visionary moments. On the other hand, if this thesis has successfully suggested to the reader that the author's analysis might well demonstrate just one good reason for returning to the political philosophy *and* theory of Hegel and his *ex-eventu* form of philosophical and theoretical discourse, then his efforts will have been well and duly rewarded.

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